

FROM A CHAPLAIN'S PROSPECTIVE: CAN WE MOURN TOGETHER
THOSE NOT BORN TOGETHER

By

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ABSTRACT

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Chaplains are not involved in the Bereavement group process at the Hospice Care Network. Licensed Social Workers operate as Bereavement counselors, yet Chaplains whom serve as spiritual care counselors during the patient's disease progression and who often officiate at their funerals and memorials are not included. For many people, faith is a present and continuing reality, while others may argue that things, which have no reality in themselves, are made real by faith. As such I would like to see if and how faith plays a role for those who grieve the loss of loved ones within a multifaith bereavement group setting.

To my incredible wife Wanda, remarkable daughter Felicia, and exceptional mom Ethel,
Family, Friends, peers, and colleagues thank you all for your love, prayers and support.

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I express gratitude to my spiritual cousin Cynthia Diaz, for planting the seed that began this journey, Jerry Calhoun my Manager and mentor at the Hospice Care Network for his unlimited support, time and guidance, and Bishop Lionel Harvey my spiritual father for his covering, words of wisdom and direction in the work of the ministry.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

I work for the Hospice Care Network (HCN), located in Woodbury, New York, as a non-denominational chaplain. As such I serve individuals and families from a multitude of faith beliefs, race, cultures, customs, walks of life, and economic standings. Some have religious connections in their communities while others do not. My role as a pastoral care counselor / chaplain is simply to walk in the suffering of others (patient or caregiver) to help them say whatever is true for them, so that they may find peace within, as they or a loved one draw near to the end of their life cycle.

Our mission at HCN is to enable persons to live in peace and with dignity in a caring environment during the final stages of life by offering care and comfort both to them and to those with whom they share their lives. We develop and provide individualized programs of care and supportive services during dying, death and bereavement that enhance quality of life by addressing physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. Our vision is for patients to have a peaceful and meaningful end-of-life experience – one in which they have the time and physical capacity to get their affairs in order, have meaningful conversations with friends and loved ones and resolve any unfinished “business” in their lives.

Hospice Care Network (HCN) is a certified not-for-profit hospice organization, serving families and patients in Nassau, Suffolk and Queens Counties. Consisting of the former Hospice of the South Shore, Hospice Care of Long Island and Hospice Care of Queens, HCN has been caring for patients in their own homes, in nursing homes and

hospitals since 1988. It is one of the oldest, largest and most respected hospice organizations in the State of New York.

As a member of the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, HCN is committed to the highest quality care and is accredited by JCAHO as meeting the highest standards expected in the field. We also maintain close relationships with the Hospice and Palliative Care Association of New York State and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, always keeping current with the newest developments in the field of hospice and palliative care.

The role of chaplains as it relates to the Palliative care units of our hospitals has expanded as our services are offered not only in Franklin hospital, but now Pennisula hospital in Far Rockaway, and the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, in Manhasset. This reflects the agencies acknowledgement in the vitality of chaplains in such area's where treatment may no longer be an option, but symptoms and pain issues can be managed and addressed. For some people pain is not just physical but can be symptomatic of spiritual issues such as forgiveness, regrets, fear, anxiety, and reconciliation, etc.

HCN does not discriminate in the hiring of personnel or in the provision of care regardless of race, color, disability, sex, sexual preference, age, handicap, marital status, or national origin.

The main headquarters of the Hospice Care Network is located in Woodbury, Long Island. The criterion for a patient to come on the program is that they be designated by a physician to have a life expectancy of six (6) months or less. The illnesses of those on the program include cancer, dementia and heart disease, to name a few. Patients range in age from days old to early 100's, and our chaplains are trained and experienced to offer pastoral / spiritual care as needed.

The Hospice Care Network (HCN) is comprised of teams consisting of a Team leader (generally an experienced Registered Nurse), Social Worker, Chaplain, Nurses, a Doctor, and a Bereavement counselor. The organization operates on donations, and is non-profit in nature. The Bereavement unit generally contacts family and loved ones within a month of a person's death. They offer group, individual, and children bereavement programs, to those who have had people on program and to those who have not.

The Hospice Inn is beautifully furnished with 17 private rooms and amenities such as a family-style kitchen, sunroom and outdoor terrace, and offers patients and their loved ones privacy, comfort and quality of life. Sleep-in accommodations and a convenient central location along major highways on the border of Nassau and Suffolk Counties make for easy visiting any time, day or night. Because of the intensity of the Hospice Inn, one chaplain is assigned there daily to ensure that the spiritual care needs of the patients and families is attended to. Quite often for some people we reach out to their faith community, or seek the services of the local Catholic parish for requests of the anointing of the sick, and communion. Many people request the "Last Rites", which we carefully explain is now called the anointing of the sick. I believe this change came about from the Catholic Church because the term last rites sounded so grave; wherein anyone can request the anointing of the sick, and not be on their deathbed, excuse the pun.

Services at the Hospice Inn:

The Hospice Inn may be appropriate for patients:

- Whose pain and symptom management needs are greater than can be managed at home.
- Who are transitioning from the hospital to hospice at home.
- Whose caregiver needs a brief period of respite.
- Who are nearing the end of their disease progress.

HCN's expert physicians, nurses and personal care aides are on staff at The Hospice Inn at Huntington to deliver quality medical care to treat the pain and symptoms of the patient's illness, and our social workers, chaplains and trained volunteers are also on-site to provide counseling and companionship.

Services at the Hospice & Palliative Care Unit at Franklin Medical Center:

The Hospice & Palliative Care Center at Franklin services patients in the final stages of life, as well as their families, with care and comfort in an inpatient setting designed to feel like home. Private rooms, homelike décor and parlors for family respite contribute to a peaceful, dignified environment. Patients and their families are treated with the utmost compassion by a dedicated and responsive staff, and can take comfort in unlimited visitation and sleep-in accommodations. As noted earlier we have also expanded into Peninsula Hospital located in Far Rockaway, N.Y. and North Shore North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, in Manhasset.

Services in a Nursing Home:

When nursing home residents choose Hospice Care Network to assist with their care, we will work with the nursing home to enhance the patient's comfort. While Medicare and most insurance plans will cover this, the patient will still have to pay the nursing home's daily room and board fee.

Services for the Family:

Many issues arise when a family is facing the loss of a loved one. Because emotional and spiritual well-being are as important as managing pain and symptoms, a large staff of licensed social workers and chaplains play an integral role on our care team. We recognize that each patient and family is unique, and we strive to be responsive to the special needs of everyone we serve.

Our goal is for patients to have a peaceful, meaningful, end-of-life experience—one in which they have the time and physical capacity to get their affairs in order, have meaningful conversations with friends and loved ones, and resolve any unfinished “business” in their lives.

As a chaplain in the nursing home, we often get to know the patient and family pretty well over a long period of time, or because of the intensity of the patient’s illness, bonds can be established more quickly. For some who do not have connections to their local religious denomination, many times the assigned chaplain is asked to perform funerals or memorial services, for the patient. From experience this proves to be very comforting for the caregivers and families as the chaplain speaks more intimately about a person they really knew, which helps the family to find solace. Many years ago I remember when my brother in law died. He did not have any connection to a church. A preacher was contacted by the funeral home who performed his service. It was one of the coldest eulogies I had ever witnessed, in fact he would have benefited greatly from the services of a hospice agency. It is truly a blessing when a chaplain who has spent time with a family can share sacred stories of the patients past, or interesting moments from their interactions.

Hospice Care Network's counseling team will:

- Provide individual and family counseling
- Assist the patient and caregiver with stress management skills
- Help patients and families understand the feelings they may be having
- Provide information and link the family to community resources they may need
- Provide support and education regarding end-of-life issues
- Meet jointly with patients and families to facilitate meaningful conversation and resolve issues
- Help family members anticipate grief and bereavement issues
- Provide special counseling for children who are close to the patient
- Troubleshoot issues that may be affecting the patient's quality of life
- Provide bereavement counseling to family members for one year following the death.

At the request of the patients, Hospice Care Network chaplains will:

- Offer prayer with patients and family members
- Answer questions and discuss concerns about spiritual matters
- Offer help in coping with common feelings such as loneliness, anger and fear
- Help contact the patient's own clergy, if desired
- Facilitate receiving sacraments of the church¹

¹ <http://www.hospice-care-network.org/hospice-services.htm>.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

As a chaplain with the Hospice Care Network in Long Island, N.Y., I serve many individuals and families who are at the end of their life cycle with varied faith beliefs. The question is can Chaplains help people of multifaiths mourn together, in an effort to discover peace, healing, and comfort in God during the bereavement process. This project will establish written guiding principles useful for Chaplains/Clergy engaged in the bereavement setting.

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As part of this project, I have asked as a Board Certified Chaplain to sit in on the eight-week bereavement group process offered to families and individuals who have lost loved ones on the HCN program. My initial request was denied; which really highlights the plausibility of this project. On March 16, 2009, during an HCN Chaplain staff

meeting I discussed with peers their thoughts on chaplains and their potential impact in the bereavement care process.

Many shared that they saw the role as vital, and helpful to families and loved ones of the deceased who may have issues with God and their grief. One chaplain replied that when he was working on his Masters in Divinity he asked to sit in on a bereavement group, but was denied because it was felt that his presence would have an adverse effect on the groups dynamics and that of the groups facilitator; a response I received also as it relates to my project goals and hopes. A peer observed that bereavement trainees do sit in on groups. We also learned that one of our co-workers was not encouraged to submit bereavement assessment forms as that was thought to be the work of a social worker, and not a chaplain.

It is hoped that the outcome of this demonstration project will increase the validation of the profession for Chaplains who are far more capable and gifted than just to present scripture, spiritual life reviews, prayers and songs to patients and caregivers. Remarkably, one of the in-service programs planned by the HCN Pastoral care department and myself this year (2009) is to detail the role of chaplains; which should help better define what we do in the agency. This seminar is scheduled for Pastoral Care Week and will capture via role-play and open discussion the issues of spirituality as it relates to both those of faith and not.

Paradoxically during a HCN mandatory training session held later on during the day it was disclosed that the agency is trying to expand their role in the bereavement care of others. When asked what we were doing differently, I was informed that we now provide trips for families and caretakers that may reinforce their reintroduction back into

society. I firmly believe that as an agency we can do more, and that Chaplains may be on the cutting edge of that change.

However, there must first be a level of consciousness raising that enhances our viability and skills with our counterparts and associates. This will be brainstormed with my supervisor the current manager of the pastoral care department. As a staff chaplain my goal is not to upset the apple cart at the Hospice Care Network, but rather to echo that chaplaincy as a vocation is more than fruits savored to wet the religious appetite, but can be the vehicle to drive one to find peace within the context of one's faith and self after the loss of a loved one.

None of us can escape the sorrow and burden of death. It appears plausible to suggest that in a multifaith community we can find comfort and support in our losses to move beyond our pain, with the help of health care professionals such as Licensed Social workers, and Chaplains, which is where the challenge lies. It is my hope that chaplains may begin to play an effectual role one day in the HCN bereavement process, as spiritual vitality is essential to one's overall sense of well being. One of the first rules in chaplaincy is to first do no harm, which is a dynamic that rests deep in my heart.

If the role of chaplains at the Hospice Care Network is not expanded into the bereavement unit, I trust that awareness will be raised in the agency to show its potential via the "Spiritual Care Workshop" composed by the Pastoral Care Departments chaplains, and through my D.Min. Workshop, "Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together."

In his book, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, J. William Worden writes, “People may blame the physician, the funeral director, family members, an insensitive friend, and frequently God”²; as it relates to the loss of loved ones.

As a new chaplain, I had a Jewish patient who held God responsible for the death of her uncle who left behind a large, loving family. It was that anger which enhanced her mind-set of abandonment from the Holy One as she suffered the ravages of cancer, while feeling her young life (age 38) slipping away. As angry as she was with God, it was through the pastoral care of chaplains that she was able to find peace within and reconciliation with God. She truly mourned who she used to be, but was able to capture the remnant of her spirit, which was still alive, and thriving. Her spiritual breakthrough as manifested by the skills of chaplain’s, became a topic for the hospitals ethical review board, on the pros of sound pastoral care with difficult patients, which I was honored to be a part of.

I believe wholeheartedly that Chaplains, with a wealth of knowledge garnered by training, experience and wisdom, can help those not born together, mourn together. My agency like many Hospice care organizations serves people from a multitude of faith traditions.

In order to be Board Certified, a chaplain must show pastoral competency by providing pastoral ministry to diverse people, taking into consideration multiple elements of cultural and ethnic differences, social conditions, systems, and justice issues without imposing one’s personal perspectives. And that is the essential core that will drive this project to fruition, for both my agency and the other health care facilities that may be

² J. William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 4th edition (New York: Springer Publishing, 2009), 20.

impacted by the results of this study, as chaplains are trained to help others cope with the issues of grief, mourning, and spirituality regardless of ones faith tradition.

CHAPTER 3: PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goal 1

To raise the awareness of administrators, and other staff (bereavement counselors, social workers, nurses, physicians, etc.) from the Hospice Care Network as to how Jews, Christians, and Muslims may mourn together to find peace, and solace with God despite their religious differences, from a chaplains prospective.

Strategies

1. Interview Faith group leaders from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity on how their faith beliefs impact their grief and mourning process, specifically looking at their rituals. (March – May 2009)
2. Recruit Faith group leaders in consultation with the site team, to participate in a round table discussion on Grief and Mourning from their religious prospective. (May – August 2009)
3. Conduct a round-table discussion before Hospice Care Network employees, administrators, and other staff with Faith group leaders from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity to explore their official belief practices regarding death and Bereavement care. To be led by myself and the Manager of the Pastoral Care Department at HCN (Fall 2009)

Evaluation

Pre and Post Surveys will be distributed; as well as open dialogue exchanged at the end of the seminar to decipher the level of knowledge gained from the round table discussions.

Results

Pre-surveys were not distributed, but post-surveys were and they were very favorable to the goals of the workshop. The surveys are attached in the appendix section marked Surveys.

Goal 2

I will sit in on a bereavement group run by the Hospice Care Network, to learn more intently the issues raised and focused upon in grief, and the techniques used to empower people to spiritual wholeness, absent a chaplain. (April – May 2009)

Strategies

1. The Site Team and I will identify for clarification purposes an operational definition of spiritual issues as it relates to grief and mourning.
(March 2009)
2. The Site Team individually will interview various members of the Bereavement unit on the role religion plays in the life of the grieved, if any.
(March – May 2009)
3. The Site Team and I will develop a survey form to be used in the interviews of the Bereavement staff, with 5-10 pertinent questions to be addressed.
(March 2009)
4. The site team and I will explore how other Hospice agencies operate in their use or non-use of chaplains as part of the bereavement process, as it relates to issues of grief and spirituality in the context of multifaiths.
(March – May 2009)

Evaluation

Through the research of other Hospice bereavement programs the site team will compare the spiritual goals and objectives of each program compared to that of the HCN to decipher their overall effectiveness in meeting the needs of those from a multifaith context.

Result

This Goal was not accomplished, as the HCN Bereavement manager did not approve of my participation in an eight-week bereavement group process. Although the issue could have been presented to the agencies Chief Operating officer for rebuttal, I did not want this issue to be a sore point for the agency, the social workers, chaplains, or myself. As such, it did not make sense to pursue how other Hospice agencies operate in their bereavement departments with regards to issues of spirituality and faith, as I could not measure my own as a barometer.

Goal 3

I will produce an article on the findings, practice, and results of chaplains involved in the multifaith bereavement group process, for *Plainviews* (an on-line chaplains newsletter).

(March – April 2010)

Strategies

1. Research other Hospice Organizations to decipher the role Chaplains play in the Bereavement process. (Site team and myself March 2009- October 2009)
2. I will conduct a workshop for chaplains detailing the results of this project. (Spring 2010)

Evaluation

Through interviews, surveys, and tests the chaplains will be questioned to determine their knowledge of multifaith bereavement issues, and the role chaplaincy can play.

Result

An article is forthcoming regarding this projects journey for *Plainviews*, however its scope has not yet been decided; but it is imminent.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Sarah lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life. And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Abraham rose up from beside his dead, and said to the Hittites, "I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Genesis chapter 23:1-4).

This text from the bible appears to symbolize the first impression of grief and mourning which transcends into the multifaith arena, as Abraham states, "I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Ironically, there is a handbook by Barbara Karnes entitled *Gone From My Sight*,³ that is distributed to the caregivers of HCN patients, which captures the signs of death.

But this project, seeks to move beyond death, and into the hearts of those who mourn and are bereaved over those loved ones no longer in their sights and daily lives.

³ Barbara Karnes, *Gone From My Sight* (DePoe Bay, Oregon: Barbara Karnes Books, 2005).

Research question #1

Like the Hittites who were expected by Abraham to understand his pain and grief over the loss of his spouse, despite religious and cultural differences can we also anticipate today that level of respect and sincerity amongst those of differing beliefs?

And is the above scripture text indicative of how we may all lament together respectfully those not born together? Does it speak to the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith? Can comfort in grief be found amongst others who do not share the same sacred beliefs or customs? Does this text speak at all to the religion of the other? The answer to these questions in its most basic sense is yes.

In the book, *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, Ellen Levine writes, “The tradition of reciting a eulogy dates back to Abraham, who recited a eulogy when his wife, Sarah died.”⁴ Although all three faiths conduct eulogies there is a terse difference between them. The Jewish funeral is often one of deep sorrow. The prayers and eulogy evoke one’s normative feelings of sadness at the loss, with words and prayers of courage often said. The occasion allows for the public expression of sadness that mourners are experiencing.

For this reason, in Judaism the bereaved often enter the funeral service having torn a portion of their outer garment, which symbolizes their expression of grief, or they may have pinned a mourning black ribbon on themselves that is symbolically torn to express grief. When I went to the funeral for one of my Jewish patients a couple of years ago the garments were actually cut at the gravesite service, thus there was a strong sense of grief, sadness, and loss in that faith’s tradition.

⁴Ellen Levine “Jewish Views and Customs on Death,” in Colin Parkes, ed., 98-130, *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures* (New York: Routledge Press, 2007), 108 .

Conversely in my Baptist Christian faith tradition, we don't mourn the death of loved ones so much as we celebrate their life. Thus our services are called, "Home Going Services." One will often hear a preacher say at the eulogy, "and we know that to be absent of the body is to be present with the Lord."⁵

So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8 NRSV).

In addition there have been numerous funerals and services that I have attended for my hospice patients where humor was the healing balm. For many people in my experience loss is handled and coped with in numerous ways.

I have attended it would seem, just as many funerals that were solemn as those that were comical. Interestingly though, it is often said in various aspects of life that how you start determines how you will finish; so sadly enough, perhaps because we try to celebrate the death of congregants in such a positive light, that when it comes to bereavement in our religious communities we sadly miss the mark. Because Jews have a tradition of mourning nestled with support perhaps for many of them it is easier to cope with loss, as opposed to some Christian denominations who after the food is served, the last card is read, the phone calls stop, and the bereaved is expected to just continue in the journey called life.

In the article, "The Many Facets of Islam," Gerdien Jonker points out that Islam has many faces. Since its origins more than thirteen hundred years ago the Islamic religion has mingled many people and nationalities and adapted to a great many social

⁵ Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

surroundings, geographical conditions and historical backgrounds.⁶ Because of this it is most difficult to get a true assessment of their bereavement process.

According to *Prayers & Rituals At A Time of Illness & Dying*, “grieving in Islam is done for three days.”⁷ In my Demonstration workshop, it was pointed out that the bereavement process for Muslims is about the same as the other faith denominations of Judaism and Christianity; so in essence although there may be variables on how we grieve and conduct eulogies, the bottom line is that we attend such services in community and care for the bereaved.

In his book, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, J. William Worden writes:

Grieving is a social phenomenon, and the need to grieve with others can be important. The degree of perceived emotional and social support from others, both inside and outside the family, is significant in the mourning process.⁸

I am saddened that I was unable to be part of the bereavement process at my agency, as I believe Worden’s notion that healing in a community can be supporting and quite nurturing. I am mesmerized by the notion of insights that would have been obtained from such involvement. However, in spite of this I do heavily endorse the Hospice Care Networks bereavement services. I mention services as the agency offers not only groups for adults, but children, specialized groups for parents, spouses, and offer individualized services as well. I was pleased to learn that for those who cannot get out, we also offer home bereavement services. It is important to note as well that group

⁶ Parkes, *Death and Bereavement*, 147.

⁷ Pat Fosarelli, *Prayers & Rituals At A Time of Illness & Dying* (West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), 61.

⁸ Worden, *Grief Counseling*, 73.

dynamics don't work for everyone, so personalized individual services is a wonderful option.

When our belief systems are related or we have had comparable experiences, we may offer what we have learned and what we now believe as food for thought. And we can share knowledge about the beliefs subscribed to by members of different religious and spiritual traditions. Thus we act as midwives for the birthing of new or revised meaning systems.⁹ I am reminded by this of a story told by a patient who lived on a farm in Corona, Queens in New York. The patient in his nineties reflected on when he was ten years old and his grandfather promised him his first ride on a horse. The patient stated that he couldn't sleep all night and got up early in the morning full of excitement to embark on this grand experience of a lifetime. His grandfather walked into the barn, and led the horse out. He then proceeded to mount the horse and off he went for almost an hour. When he got back the grandfather gave the horse some water and proceeded to walk the horse around the land. The patient exclaimed, "Grandpa I thought you said that I could ride the horse". His grandfather replied, "Son you will, but you see when the horse gets up in the morning he is antsy and ready to go. And I had to tire him out for you." Wow, I thought as a chaplain and preacher, what a great story to share with others of why we have to wait for God. Sometimes we want what we want, but may not really be ready for it. In reflection, this was the experience that I hoped for the workshop conducted on December 4, 2009. Many times we possess far more skills, experiences, and notions than we even realize. I was talking with someone recently as they recounted a song sung to them some seventy years ago to them as a child from their grandmother.

⁹ Dorothy S. Becvar, *In The Presence Of Grief* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 236.

She didn't realize the essence of the tune at the time, but as she reflects on it now, she understands the magnitude of her grandmother's faith, which is now well embedded, in her spirit and mindset. As I reviewed the recording of the workshop, I believe many people had, "A ha" moments when certain feelings and thoughts rang true for them as various issues arose.

The story of Abraham in Genesis chapter 23 verses 1-4 identifies the first notion of grief in the bible, but its point is not as germane as I would have liked for my demonstration project. I was talking with a site team member a while back and asking him to put together a case study that we could use for the upcoming D. Min. workshop, "Can We Mourn Together."

Originally he agreed and stated "no problem," but as the rigors of his job and other responsibilities required more of his time he was unable to put together the study. Nonetheless, as the *Holy Spirit* would have it, I was again reading the book of Genesis and came across the story of Joseph being sold by his brothers into slavery. The grief of his father Jacob jumped off the pages at me. The grief of a parent over a child is something that most people can sympathize with. And the fact that this story is germane to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam made it the ideal scripture for us to look at. So this scripture was sent to my panelists for my D.Min. demonstration project.

The panelist Pastor Jim Barnum of the Bellmore Presbyterian Church in Long Island New York, Rabbi Simcha Zamir of the Congregation Temple Sholom in Westbury, N.Y., and Dr. Ali al-Rahman a member of the Long Island Islamic Center also located in Westbury, N.Y. were asked to review this scripture from their religious prospective.

They looked at the below identified scripture text:

Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father bewailed him (Genesis 37:31-35 NRSV).

In looking at the issue or whether those not born together can mourn together, the following question was pondered.

Research question #2

Can the Torah, the Qur'an, and Bible be referenced with a central theme of mourning? Hans Georg Gadamer once noted that, "Being which can be understood is language¹⁰." I am wondering if these three divinely inspired texts can help formulate a new level of being that can transcend the multifaith threshold in the area of loss and grief, where a common language may be found intrinsic in our very being.

The answer to question #2 is absolutely yes, and the scripture text found in Genesis, chapter 37 regarding Jacob's grief over his son Joseph is a perfect case in point. Hermeneutics, I believe is propelled by the future fueled by our past. When I look at the video of the demonstration project I am awed at how this simple scripture on grief birthed passionate memories from each of the participating panelist in a uniquely personal way. How powerful it was as Rabbi Simcha spoke of the youth who died in the tragic bus accident when he was yet a teen, and Pastor Jim spoke about the death of his mom, and

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader: a Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 346.

how the priest did not come to the cemetery which his father spoke about for a decade; and Dr. Ali who talked about the death of his first wife in the early 1990's.

When Rabbi Zamir opened with the thought, "People often ask me when did I fall in love with my wife or when did she fall in love with me?" He mentioned how this is a common question asked of couples, something that I believe most people in the audience could relate to.

But then he posed the following thought. Nobody, he stated, ever asks you when did you first fell in love with your child or children. It is a question I would assume that is rarely pondered, asked, or thought about. Well that is how our exegesis of this scripture started from a multifaith prospective; and it was no doubt a powerful presentation.

Ironically, from the Christian view, Pastor Barnum told of how this text always spoke to him, as he was the youngest of his siblings and considered to be the favored child, so he really had a personal insight on the feelings of Joseph and his brothers. Ali Rahman chimed in on his thoughts as well on grief and bereavement, and the need for positive coping techniques, which can combat the anger that often accompanies grief and mourning.

Research Question #3

In his essay, "Text and Interpretation," Hans Georg Gadamer writes, "the text represents the basis of all exegesis, which in turn presupposes the truths of faith.¹¹"

The substantive question posed by this statement in the context of Multifaith Ministry is, "Can a level of truth be found that supports and aligns with those from varied

¹¹ Gadamer, 168.

other faith beliefs?” In fact the third question to be raised is, what is truth? If a common ground of truth cannot be identified or found, then one has to question the milieu of why a multifaith group would even form. Truth has to find a central place. One is not likely to dialogue with others and their way of thinking if some level of trust is not apparent.

Well, that is exactly what we tried to decipher and extrapolate in the, “Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together,” workshop as we looked at our text on Jacob and his son Joseph, from the book of Genesis. As the panelists at our grief forum looked at the grief of Jacob over his son Joseph in the book of Genesis, their search for their own truths made the workshop the success that it was.

As Ali stated, “I am not clergy,” during his introduction, and professed to enter the dialogue from his own existential experiences, his message really resonated with the audience; as he did not purport to be something he was not. Truth can often be found embedded in humility. When Rabbi Zamir asked the question, “when was the first time you fell in love with your child?” that was a profound awe-inspiring spiritual statement which demanded true contemplation.

When Pastor Barnum told his own story and how he related to Joseph feeling like the favored child in his family again we the audience were catapulted into his life, and into our own realms of reality and truth. While theology needs to be faithful to the full experience and contexts of the past, it is authentic theology only when what has been received is appropriated, made our own.¹²

As Christians, we are taught to be of the same mind and spirit of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Luke 10:10-11, the disciples are told to shake the dust off of their feet from

¹² Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 5.

any person or town that does not accept their message of the Good news of Christ. It's funny how we are told in one circumstance to love our brother with the love of God, but yet on the other hand we learn of alienating and in fact pronouncing curses on those who do not agree with our level of spirituality and truth.

This contrast is striking for me. Perhaps it is this thrust into the multifaith context that will continually allow my consciousness to see not just the light of my own faith, Christianity, but also its darkened shaded areas of gray, which can be seen by others as oppressive.

According to Gadamer, “we do not leave the text behind us but allow ourselves to enter into it.”¹³ One wonders if varied faith groups can enter into that which is not familiar scriptural texts, yet still glean insights that reflect enlightenment and new levels of consciousness never before imagined or anticipated. Again when I look at the video from our workshop the panelists from varied faith traditions truly entered into the experience from a level of truth and humility, which allowed us all to glean insights never before encountered or grasped.

¹³.Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader*, 188.

CHAPTER 5: MY SPIRITUAL LIFE, JOURNEY, AND PRACTICE

It would appear that feelings of grief and mourning visit us, at one point or another in our lives, and often when we least expect it; it is in fact inevitable. For me, the death of my adopted father George Teachey, Jr. in July of 1963 was a great tragic loss. I remember going on a 4th of July picnic up to Bear Mountain with my mom and dad, and a busload of folks from the neighborhood. While on the picnic my father sprained his ankle. I recall vividly his friends helping him to the bus as he limped aboard. Later I remember my mom, a nurse, wrapping his ankle and soaking it in the living room, and him perhaps saying, “I will be all right!” That is the last time I saw my father, as he died three days later from a blood clot. His death was so unexpected! Even to this day, over forty-five years later, my mom still states, “I hope nobody else will have to endure such a shock.”

Unlike Jesus who arose from the dead in three days, who dies from a sprained ankle after three days? I was four years old when he died. Because of my young age it was thought best that I not attend my father’s funeral. So that scene in the living room, is the last picture I have of him in my head.

I really don’t know how I processed his death at that time; however, four (4) months later in November of 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and his funeral became my father’s memorial service for me. I can see today that black and white television positioned in the living room and the horse drawn carriage carrying what

some thought was the president (J.F.K.). But to me, that was my father going down Pennsylvania Ave, in Washington, D.C. The question of “Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together” is intriguing, yet I know that on the day of J.F.K.’s funeral I mourned the death of my father and a nation grieved with me, albeit for different reasons.

Hermeneutics, it seems, is propelled by the future, while fueled by our past. In reflection, the seed for this project was probably planted way back then; as I could see the tears and heartache of the people saddened by the tragic death of our young American president. I don’t remember shedding tears of grief, but I recall feeling the heartache of sorrow.

There have been many times in our nations history, when we grieved as a people. The bombing of Pearl Harbor, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and the fall of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, are just a few examples of catastrophic anguish felt by this nation, both in the past and most recently.

Locally in our communities we often experience the loss of police officers, firefighters, and military service people, along with the tragedies of those we lose to illness, fires, crime, vehicular accidents, and other unexpected mishaps that plague our world, and environment.

As I look back over my life and replay the tapes of my memory, I can see the beginning of my journey into the multifaith realm. I realize that over thirty-five years ago I was planted in an area of the City that was truly of multiple faiths. In the nineteen sixties the city of New York embarked on a desegregation-busing program. Because of it I attended elementary and middle school in an area with both Jewish and Catholic

students. And as that became engrained I was also introduced to others of my same skin color, but whose life cycles appeared for some reason, somewhat dissimilar than my own.

Although we may have looked similar, economically we appeared worlds apart. I can remember clearly how the Jewish boys and girls played regularly with the Catholic boys and girls, and us, the children from my black community. It was a time when in the evenings we all went home to our individual houses and locations, and looked at the Brady Bunch, the Partridge Family, and the like. Our individual faiths existed, but we were united by our youth. Today I wonder how many are still tied to their faiths, and how that has impacted or guided their lives.

Several years ago I was talking to one of my Jewish patients who was 38 years old and dying of cancer. She was bitter, and very angry with God for the pain she endured, and the limited time she had left on earth. She was a health fanatic, who didn't drink or smoke, and who exercised regularly; yet that well-behaved life did little to impact her death sentence.

And so one day during our normal conversations, she wanted to know more about me and so I told her the story of when I first heard the voice of the Lord/Spirit. I was getting ready to retire from my law enforcement career and praying in my office at work, and said Lord, "I am getting ready to stop working, and don't have a clue as to what I am going to do." And just as clear as day, the spirit of the Lord said, "I have something for you to do."

Despite the agony and depression the patient felt she replied, "George, if God speaks to you, God listens to you." I was blown away by her remark. She never

hesitated or delayed in her observation. Those words just rolled off her lips. I had never heard those words before, and they were spoken so profoundly.

That patient died months later, but her message still lives on with me, and I know emphatically that we can mourn together those not born together. Ironically although she was mad at God, she could still bridge the connection between God and someone else's life. In his book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, James Cone writes, "Because God is always more than our experience of God, the reality of God cannot be limited to a particular human experience."¹⁴ In my struggle to understand the unfathomable essence of the trinity of God, and how it impacts upon the world, and myself, I fall way short, limited by my own experiential situations.

In *Teología*, Luis G. Pedraja writes, "Allowing a singular, dominant voice to define what is to be our entire understanding of God can only leave us with a truncated understanding of our faith, because ultimately, all of our theologies are contextual, limited, and particular."¹⁵

Thus as part of God's creation, there is an innate spirit that binds us categorically together despite our varied plateaus of life and religious convictions. Karl Barth states, "In His free grace, God is for man in every respect; He surrounds man from all sides. He is man's Lord who is before him, above him, after him, and thence also with him in history, the locus of man's existence."¹⁶ Although my patient felt forsaken by God, her

¹⁴ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 78.

¹⁵ Luis G. Pedraja, *Teología, An Introduction to Hispanic Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 16.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 72.

utterance and revelation to me reflected that God existed within the core of her being, although she felt empty. John Calvin said it best when he wrote, “Since we are placed in such a beautiful world, we should take a reverent delight in God’s work of creation. It is the first sign of faith (though not the greatest) to realize that everything we look at is made by God, and to think reverently about his purposes in creation.”¹⁷

As I was contemplating this doctorate in ministry program back in the summer of 2007, a woman employee at the Cold Springs Hills nursing center asked me if I was a doctor. When I replied ‘no’, and stated, “but I wish I had a doctor’s money,” she said, “you can; all you have to do is go to school.” Little did she know that I was considering the NYTS Doctor of Ministry program (D.Min).

Weeks later at the Hospice Inn days before my first class for the D.Min, (looking at religion in the context of Multifaiths), I met a gentleman who was telling me about the Qur’an and how he had one, that he didn’t know what to do with. After our brief conversation, he stated, “I guess this book is for you,” and he proceeded to go to his car and brought me the Qur’an, which sits on my bookshelf to this day. This presented two signs that this was the right path for the right time, in God’s plan, for me.

In the book, *The Places You Go*, Urias Beverly writes, “Spirituality for me, is more than belief in God, going to church, being a Christian (or some other faith), reading the Bible and praying; spirituality is much broader than religious behavior and belief. It includes values by which we live, attitudes about certain things that are meaningful to each individual, morals, character, and ethical behavior.”¹⁸ I am reminded of Martin

¹⁷ John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2004), 57-58.

¹⁸ Urias Beverly, *The Places You Go* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 144-145.

Luther who made the statement that God is nearer to all creatures than they are to themselves. He speaks of creatures as the ‘masks’ of God; God is hidden behind them. All creatures are God’s masks and veils in order to make them work and help him to create many things.¹⁹

As I have been struggling with pressing play on this D. Min. project versus staying on pause, a perpetual state of the not knowing while still studying along, I came across a beautiful stir of the spirit. On Monday, September 28, 2009, I was leaving my Woodbury, New York office when I saw a row of leaves about 200 feet before me. As the winds picked up, the leaves began to blow before me, but in a whirlwind circular motion.

I had never seen anything like that before. I expected the leaves to blow in my direction horizontally but not in a circular unbroken vibrancy. I was stunned and just watched in amazement. A woman unknown to me witnessed the same and stated that it was the ‘*Spirit*’. What was most notable about the woman was the visible cross-draped around her neck. My only response was, “yes, and when the spirit moves you have to follow it.” And thus I did the rest of the day; and a spectacular day it was.

What has come to mind as I think of how the Holy Spirit moves is the day that Mrs. C, one of my early patients as a chaplain in training, was informed of her fatal diagnosis while in the hospital. The doctor stated that they could do no more for her, as I was present in the room. She allowed me to stay and hear that dialogue. I was nervous and relatively raw in this ministry/vocation. I had previously seen a miracle of healing take place in her life, which she had attributed to my earlier prayer. It was not until this

¹⁹Martin Luther, “The Theology of the Protestant Reformers” in *A History of Christian Thought*, Paul Tillich, 227-275 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 248.

writing that I realized, on that day God had planted the Hospice journey seed that was to germinate and take a slow growth into my spirit.

The other incident that was significant was that in my last unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) a woman on the OB/GYN unit of the North Shore University Manhasset Hospital wanted me to baptize her still born daughter, upon delivery. As soon as I had entered the woman's room she asked me, "what time do you get off from work?" I told her five o'clock, and asked why? She then told me her request. Hours later I was called at home and told that that the child had come forth. As I went back to the hospital I felt and sensed a true call or purpose.

Weeks later I volunteered to be the on-call chaplain for the evening shift at the hospital. It was just something impressed on my spirit to do. I had never done that before, but I have learned early in my calling to pay attention to the unction of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless at midnight the hospital beeper went off.

The emergency room nurse informed me that a thirty-eight year old woman had died in a car crash and her two brothers were not handling it well. I asked the nurse for the family's name. The name she gave me I had only heard one other time in my life. The person I knew by that name I had worked with as a rookie Correction Officer in the New York City Department of Correction back in the early 1980's. Twenty-five minutes later as I walked the floor of the hospital corridor, I saw the silhouette of that officer who I had not seen in over 20 years. I stayed with the two brothers for quite awhile doing a spiritual life review, and offering prayers. It was meant for me to be there.

Some time later I was in the pastoral care department of the hospital where I was near the end of my CPE training and in need of a job in chaplaincy. I was in the office

with a man who was there for an interview. I really didn't want to be there, but I couldn't leave him alone. The phone rang and it was a chaplain from the Hospice Care Network reaching out, as his agency was looking for a chaplain, and he wanted to know if anyone was looking for a job. I laughed and told God in my spirit, 'I got the message.'

Several weeks later I went on an interview at the Hospice Care Network, got the job and was working as a chaplain within a month. I have been there ever since. I was later told that I was the number one pick for the job, which reflects that I was God's choice for the season. What an awesome journey, especially when you can connect the dots. All praises belong to the Lord.

There is a line in a book by Hendrikus Berkhof which states, "The world as we know it is ambiguous; it hides God as much as it reveals him".²⁰ The Holy Spirit however reveals whatever the world attempts to hide. Just as biblical doctrine is intended to correct, rebuke, and edify; the Spirit searches for the truth, and guides us into alliance with God's purpose for our lives.

In April of 2003, I retired from the New York City Department of Correction as a Captain in the Health Management Division. I recall a few officers who were having a hard time coping with the loss of loved ones from the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The officers would come in to see the psychiatrist on staff, to give updates on their conditions. Many had their guns taken and were re-assigned to less stressful duties, pending their return to full duty status. As a supervisor in my law enforcement career, I was the one always trusted by my officers to render emotional support, advice, or help in the time of trouble.

²⁰ Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1964), 95.

It is now when I look back on my life, that I can better understand the pathways leading me to this vocation as a Chaplain. My training over the last several years to become a chaplain has allowed me to offer pastoral/spiritual care on a level that I never could have imagined before.

There are various categories of spirituality that people identify with. Some people consider themselves religious, others spiritual, some Gnostic, Agnostic, not sure, or say they don't care. Underlying the above is that most people do have a desire to be heard, understood and listened to.

Many individuals I find actually have a philosophy, opinion, or thought that they wish to share without having to justify or elaborate on. Some people have a need to voice that which is held inside. I have encountered many people who cry during a pastoral care visit, and later feel quite embarrassed for their tears. My reply is a simple question, "If a tea pot boils, but the steam is not released, what happens to the pot?" Most acknowledge that the pot would explode, which seems to alleviate their shame in the moment. Thus by allowing others to release their inner uncertainty (by saying whatever is true for them) via a pastoral care visit, healing begins to take place in a way that a doctor's prescription may not allow. For example, I use spiritual assessment words in reflections like, "It sounds like you feel trapped to me," using the patient's words but reframing it for them.

In the beginning of the book, *From Ministry to Theology*,²¹ there is a short little story about a new chaplain who was asked to baptize a stillborn baby. He was frightened and did not know what to do but in the moment performed a ritual for the parents of the child that they will long remember. He took the tears of the parents along with his own

²¹ John Patton, *From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action Reflection* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1990), 11.

and used them as the water to perform the ceremony. That service would never have been performed in any church that I know of for most congregations and denominations have a set pattern or way of performing the numerous rituals of their faith.

However, ministry that is done from the heart and soul may not always have a predestined pattern; thus we must be led by the spirit. In essence, it is important in ministry to let the spirit flow in love, and compassion. God and the Holy Spirit will come through if we operate in sincerity, and humbleness of heart.

In February of 2001, my mother lost her first sibling, her youngest sister who at the time was in her early 70's. She had died in her home, and was discovered by her daughter who lives out of state. She was concerned about her mom, as she had not spoken to her in a few days. Several days prior to my cousin discovering her mom dead, I heard my aunt singing to me loud and clear. As a youngster she used to sing to me, "Georgie porgie pudding pie kissed the girls and made them cry. When the boys came out to play Georgie porgie ran away." I remember clear as day that Wednesday afternoon, commuting to work around 3 p.m. and going over the Rikers Island Bridge when I heard my aunt singing to me. I didn't know it at the time, but she was saying goodbye to me in her own special way.

Later, when I recounted that story to my mom, she seemed to find some comfort in that. Beyond the fact that her sister had died alone in her home, the intermingling of the Holy Spirit appeared to give her some relief to the tragic death of her sibling. Death comes every day to one family or another. With it comes the pain, sorrow, and agony of loss hopes, dreams, new memories, and the struggle to remember and maintain the old

reminiscences. But, for many it is their faith, or belief in the after life, that gives them solace.

As 2010 begins, I think back over the year 2009, where my mom lost yet another sister, plus a brother; in addition to which, my best friend was found dead on the morning of his fiftieth birthday. As I met with his parents to give them support and to bare my own grief, I was asked to do his memorial service. His mom stated that no else could do it; it had to be me.

As I think of the numerous deaths that have occurred in my life within this past year it is incredible how each death, although difficult, brings some measure of ease because of my faith. It is that measure of belief that excited me about doing a workshop on, “Can we mourn together those not born together?” Because grief and mourning had been to my home so much during the past year, with my heart still aching, the search for how others seek or find peace in their own religious tradition really played a motivating factor in pulling this paper and project together, in a way that would be authentic, true, and meaningful to both the panelists, the audience in attendance, and myself.

The Doctorate of Ministry, although pursued in the flesh, must be guided and led by the Spirit. The unseen often has the responsibility to guide that, which is visible into the realm of possibilities so that that which is ordained, may be made manifest. As I struggle with moving forward in this project, I am often torn between the dynamics of procrastination versus the move of the Spirit. There are times in life when one must move forward; but there are also times in life when one must remain still. Ironically there is a scripture, which states, “*stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord*” (Ex 14:14), while on the other hand another sacred scripture states, “*we walk by Faith and not*

by sight" (2Cor 5:7). These verses from the bible are meant to lead and inspire Christians in their walk with God. But, in truth, depending on where you are and what you are up against, will determine whether you can move forward, or just have to stand still and pray.

CHAPTER 6: GRIEF AND MOURNING

As a Christian, a Chaplain, and Elder (ordained member of my congregation and Baptist denomination) I must really first look at the issue of grief from a personal prospective. After the death of my father in 1963, I remember sitting in the front seat of the car, as my mother drove home from her cousin's house. Her cousin lived about seven miles from us. As we got about a block away from her cousin's home, my mother began to cry.

I remember saying to her, "Mom, you promised me you wouldn't cry anymore." I believe she replied something to the effect of, "I know, I will try", as she wept and whimpered. What was so interesting about her tears is that it was dark outside and raining heavily. Watching the raindrops fall onto the windshield was as if I were watching the tears fill my mothers eyes as they cascaded down her cheeks. I felt as if I could feel the pain of her grief through the pounding of the raindrops on the car.

Most notably, however, behind my mother's tears and grief was a great belief in the Lord. She remembers vividly how on the day of my fathers' funeral she let out a great yell as she approached his casket.

You see, prior to my fathers' injury, my mother had a couple of dreams depicting a casket, and every time she approached the casket she could never see who was in it.

On the day she walked towards my father's casket at his funeral she was literally approaching the casket in her dreams. She contends to this day that those dreams were God's way of preparing her for his death.

There are different types of grief depending on who has died. There is the loss of a parent/parents, children, siblings, friends, spouses, animals, associates, colleagues, etc. It is interesting to note that in my law enforcement career uniformed employees were given four days off for bereavement; which was the equivalent of a weeks work, and in my current vocation I believe employees are offered three days off. Bereavement time in the Department of Corrections was predicated on whether the person was a member of the immediate family of the staff member, e.g. mother, father, grandparent, sibling, step relative. Aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews were generally not included unless there were extenuating circumstances; such as they lived in the immediate household. Although many companies and organizations grant their employees bereavement time, no one really knows how long the process takes for the heart to heal, or at least begin to mend.

According to Kastenbaum, grief is one response to the experience of bereavement whereas mourning may be understood as "the culturally patterned expression of the bereaved person's thoughts and feelings."²² It is important to note that regardless of one's faith background, tradition, or beliefs issues of grief and mourning can run deep, beyond that which may be seen on the surface. There is no perfect family unit and issues of hurts, disappointments, secrets, and dysfunction are present in all families, if you dig far enough.

²² Dorothy S. Becvar, *In The Presence Of Grief* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 37.

In dealing with grief and family systems, there is a wonderful story given about labeling people. We learn: “Be careful of how you label people. They may wear the badge you give them.”²³

For example: Karen the youngest of five children when her father, a ne'er-do-well alcoholic, was found dead in a local hotel. Because he had long been an embarrassment to the family, they opted for immediate cremation, and his ashes were disposed of unceremoniously. Karen wanted to provide some kind of marker for her father, but no one in the family agreed with her, and being the youngest, she had little clout. She thought this was a “crummy way to die” and she was unable to detach herself from her father. She kept him with her through a type of pathological identification that developed over the years, and her family would often say, “You’re just like your father.”

As a young woman Karen developed a serious drinking problem, which turned out to be related in part to this pathological identification with her father. Through grief therapy she was able to see the connection, to say a final goodbye to her father, to deal with the other family members concerning his death, and over time to see her problem with alcohol resolved.²⁴

Conversely, in December of 2009, I had the opportunity to do a funeral service for a family who described their loved one—Mr. M. (husband and father)—as a righteous man, but not a godly man. Righteous in terms of having strong morals and values—yet, as far as they knew, he did not pray or read the Word of God, or attend church services,. His wife stated that she did not want any poems or scriptures said, as that would not be meaningful. I knew that Mr. M was brought up as a youth in the Presbyterian Church, but had lost that connection as an adult.

As I prepared the eulogy, and went over various thoughts in my head what came to my spirit was the term, “an Excellent Spirit,” What made this memorial service difficult to prepare was that the spouse of the deceased wanted me, a chaplain, to do the

²³ Becvar, *Grief*, 37.

²⁴ Worden, *Grief Counseling*, 221.

service, but didn't want to hear about religion or God. When I really thought about Mr. M, I saw him as a very charming man, who loved his children, his life, and giving back to others. In my mind's eye, he was the epitome of a righteous man. He was also a Vietnam veteran who shared with me the nightmares he still faced from a war that ended 40 years before. I had only met with him once, but he left an indelible lasting impression.

The second time I saw him, he was non-verbal, and unresponsive, but I was able to do a spiritual life review with his family that was quite fruitful. In the book, *In the Presence of Grief*, its author points out that

Funerals offer an opportunity for public recognition of the death as well as affirmation of the life of the person who has died. They provide as well a setting in which to consider and speak about the meaning of both death and life. Whether spiritual or secular, they create a context that facilitates connection with a community of support. Indeed, a funeral may be thought of as a formalized gathering time and place for friends as well as for family to grieve. The gatherings can become something of a reunion, especially when conversations begin, "do you remember the time..."²⁵

In the eulogy I gave, I used several scriptures that pointed not so much to the essence of God, but the characteristics of one who is considered to be righteous.

"This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind/excellent spirit and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means" (Daniel 5:12 NIV).

I used this scripture in the context of the deceased's demeanor in helping others, and how he loved and cared for his children, family, and friends. As I always keep the notion of this project in back of my mind, it is apparent that we *can mourn together those not born together* when we look beyond that which is religious in nature, and into that which is spiritually in-depth, and uniquely our own in gifts and service to others.

²⁵ Becvar, *Grief*, 213.

I am reminded of another memorial service that I was asked to conduct. While on the hospice program, the patient never accepted a pastoral care visit from me, but upon his death the family asked that I preside. The gentleman was not connected to any faith, but he was an accomplished engineer, who was instrumental in the design and building of the Queens-Midtown tunnel off of the Long Island Expressway in New York City.

I studied his account of the project, and, unbeknownst to me, his family gathered pictures and related stories involving his involvement in that project. When I spoke of his successes those pictures captured the words of the eulogy. Beyond the sacred, we can sometimes find the secret manifestation of our humanity, which is nestled with purpose that is buried and hidden within each one of us.

For this eulogy, I used the scripture from 2 Chronicles 1: 6-13:

So Solomon and the assembly inquired of him there. Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you. Solomon answered God, “You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?” God said to Solomon, “Since this is your heart’s desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.” Then Solomon went to Jerusalem from the high place at Gibeon, from before the Tent of Meeting. And he reigned over Israel.

When I exegeted the text, I learned that because Solomon was young and inexperienced he was apprehensive about his ability to rule the great nation (as numerous

as the dust of the earth; cf. Gen. 13:16) over which God had placed him. So he requested that he might receive wisdom and knowledge to lead the people (2 Chronicles. 1:8-10).

"Wisdom" refers to discernment and judgment while "knowledge" means practical know-how in everyday affairs. I guided the eulogy in that direction, looking at the attributes of the deceased from the perspective of wisdom and love, and how he gave tirelessly to the happiness and well-being of his children and family that meant the world to him.

As I did the life review with the family during my pastoral care visits, it was quite evident that the father had truly honorable ways. I hope that came through in my eulogy, which appeared to give the family, comfort, hope, and pride. In the midst of her grief during the funeral planning, the patient's wife stated that she did not want the Bible read. I believe that for some people the thought of religious doctrine being spewed from a pulpit/podium is unnerving if one is not versed in theology or thoughts of God. What I did was simply apply a scriptural text to the characteristics of a man that I had met and admired. After the service the wife said it was 'perfect'. "It was exactly what I wanted." In fact, her son stated that they would love a copy of my sermonette, which I provided. The point is that there is a great difference between being religious and being spiritual.

For some, I believe religious/religion implies some connection to a particular religious denomination or belief to which they cannot connect. While many people I have met may not consider themselves religious, most do consider themselves to be spiritual in one sense or another.

The Oxford dictionary defines the word, ‘spiritual’ as “of or concerning the spirit as opposed to matter.”²⁶ Conversely, ‘religion’ is defined in the Oxford dictionary as

1. A belief in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.
2. An expression of this is in worship.
3. A particular system of faith and worship.
4. Something that one is devoted to.

²⁷

As a non-denominational chaplain, and one who tries to be sensitive to the feelings of others, I can easily understand how a person could/would run away from the notion of religion, particularly if one has not been in a church, temple, or mosque in years or not at all. The words, ‘worship,’ ‘obedience,’ and ‘devotion’ are very strong nouns. I can imagine how some may feel uncomfortable with those words in their thoughts, minds or hearts. I once heard it said that, “faith must be caught and not taught”, and for many who have not attached themselves to any level of a religious faith those words wreak havoc with their thinking process.

I believe that one of the things that made the “Can We Mourn Together” workshop so successful was the fact that the panelists did not come from an elitist religious perspective but rather from a humanistic spiritual level where hearts and minds were allied in a very special way. The issue of religious versus spiritual is significant as one ponders how those from varied faith beliefs may or can “mourn together those not born together.”

When a plane crashes with hundreds of fatalities, no one seeks the religion of the passengers to determine who goes to Heaven or Hell. Rather most people feel the pain

²⁶ s.v. “spiritual”; *The Oxford American Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 2nd edition (New York: Berkley Books, 2001).

²⁷) s.v. "religion."

and sorrow of losing a loved one, another human being too soon, too unexpectedly and too tragically.

As this project progresses, I am not sure whether it is to help others find faith or the spirit they thought was lost, in their grief. As this study continues like a seed, it is my hope that what will germinate, grow, and blossom will be for the benefit of all regardless of their faith origin or multifaith context.

Wayne Oates writes in his book, *Pastoral Care in Grief and Separation*,

Through the centuries the pastor has been the primary person responsible for dealing with the bereaved...Whether or not the pastor has accepted these responsibilities, carried them out with skill and wisdom, or even appreciated the weight of the expectations placed upon him or her, nevertheless the pastor is the one to whom people still look for the care of the bereaved.²⁸

Although that may apply to some, one can obviously see that it does not apply to all for not everyone has a pastor or spiritual care guide.

Although this doctoral project is looking at grief and mourning practices from multiple faith components, it is essential for balance not to assume a one-size-fits-all paradigm in the area of grief and mourning. My location in this project as a non-denominational chaplain allows me a lens into the religious other that is a bit clearer as opposed to my approaching it from the position of a pastor whose scope and picture could be blurred by my religious doctrine and culture.

²⁸ Wayne Oates, *Pastoral Care in Grief and Separation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 4.

In the book, *Partners in Healing*, Sarah L. Fogg, writes, “Everyone wounded by loss is *wired* for healing. That is we all have an emotional or spiritual pathway designed to return us to wholeness.”²⁹

So, if that is the case, imagine the fiber optics that can be utilized in a multifaith community whose connecting wires all wound together into a bond like a healing balm for the religious other, whose relationship to the All Mighty is real, yet contextually different. We are all cut from the same cloth (flesh), and embedded with the same gift called life, despite the varied textures of our religious diversities.

In their book, *For the Bereaved*, editors Austin Kutscher and Lillian Kutscher write,

The religious ceremony (funeral/memorial) usually takes place in the midst of developing awareness of loss and it can help to make the loss objective. Friends and relatives, by sharing grief or by their concern, provide comfort for the bereaved. The ceremony is also a symbolic sharing with the deceased in his/her death. The religious service offers for many people contact with a spiritual source of community strength that transcends beyond their own cognitive weakened state. A few may find faith that was not present before.³⁰

On September 21, 2008, I was invited to the Islamic Center of Long Island, N.Y. for their multi-faith closing Ramadan celebration. As I looked around the room, and saw the numerous clergy with their collars on, I realized that they were celebrating something that was not uniquely their own, but was rather rejoicing in the occasion of the other. Conversely we all share the same breath of life until it’s gone, and death engulfs us. And just as we can share in the breath, we can share in the mourning of death, which for some

²⁹ Sarah L. Fogg, “Visiting Those Who Mourn”, in *Partners in Healing* eds. Beverly Anne Musgrave and John R. Bickle, 45-66, (New York, Paulist Press, 2003), 45.

³⁰ Austin H. Kutscher and Lillian G. Kutscher, *For the Bereaved* (New York: Frederick Fell Inc., 1971), 24.

could be comforting. This thought is to be explored a little later in the chapters on Jewish, Islamic, and Christian grief and mourning practices.

I am always fascinated by some Jews to whom I offer pastoral care, who reply, “I am Jewish,” as if to imply that I can’t do anything for them. It has also been my observation that Jehovah Witnesses often respond the same way when offered spiritual care support.

In Plainviews, an e-mail publication of the HealthCare Chaplaincy V5n24, Chaplain Kit Hall writes in her article, “Can We Honor One Another’s Spirituality?”

Setting aside our ego-self, or the self that demands that only what we believe is good and right and true, we are now able to open ourselves to what another finds good and right and true. We do not lose ourselves or our spirituality by honoring another’s, rather we enrich our lives and our spiritual journeys by recognizing the common nature of our quest to connect with that which is special or sacred to us.³¹

Chaplain Hall’s remark is fascinating, refreshing, and embedded with truth. As I think about a family I worked with not too recently in the palliative care unit of the hospital, I am reminded of how the unresponsive patients Jewish daughter stated, that each day is to be lived to the fullest, and we must do our best to ensure that we do the best to enhance that. Life is vital, and all measures must be exhausted in order to preserve life. I regret that I did not explore with the family their beliefs in the afterlife. It would have been interesting to see if that in any way would have changed any of her perspectives on life. In other words, I ponder if belief in an afterlife influences how one may make a decision regarding life. Conversely, not several weeks ago I had another daughter whose mom was unresponsive the result of an undiagnosed stage four stomach cancer. In February her mom appeared fine, but the following month she rushed her mom to the emergency

³¹ http://www.plainviews.org/v5n24/a_p.html.

room where she received immediate surgery, and yet days later she slowly began to decline to her current state. Being on a ventilator the family was traumatized at having to make a decision over life versus death. The family in question was Catholic. I met a wife who similarly had to render a heart wrenching decision regarding taking her husband off of a ventilator. She was in a very difficult place as she bewailed why should any body have to be forced to make a decision like this, only to be judged by God later on.

In a very funny way, God was hidden within the episodes of their life struggles. For the families who had patients on life support systems, they had to struggle with the dilemma of making what they perceived to be life and death situations. For one, bewildered to wonder if God would judge her in the afterlife for her decision. A torment right here on earth in the here and right now. I can hear the pain in her voice as she bemoaned why should anybody have to make a decision like this. As I ponder these issues perhaps for the Jewish daughter, her belief in the gift of life as manifested by God actually makes all her decisions easy. You do what you have to do to preserve life, end of sentence. As a hospice chaplain I have come to learn that issues of grief and mourning are not just for those who have died. Anticipatory grief can also bring a dim light on what or whom used to be your light, and part of your life.

While operating from a multifaith context and looking at the issues of grief and mourning practices amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims there is an interesting, subtle concept of being ‘chosen’ or making a ‘choice’, as substantiated by their sacred texts.

For Jews it is written in the Torah.

And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of

Egypt, to be their slaves no more; I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. (Lev 26:12-130.

For Christians it is written in the New Testament.

Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him (Rom 10:9-12 (NRSVA).

And lastly for Muslims in the Qur'an:

This day those who reject Faith have given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion³² (Surah 5: 3).

The following chapters will delve into the grief and mourning religious practices and rituals for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Because there are numerous practices in the above named religions there is no one size fits all rule for mourning. The burden of grief hits each person differently depending on age, relationship with the deceased, the cause of death, and various other psychosocial issues and dynamics. It is my belief that at the root of it all, regardless of one's faith practice, is a great unity of the Spirit, nestled deep within that seeks to go beyond religious differences, yet reaches to the very core of our humanity.

³² Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Qur'an* (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., 2007).

CHAPTER 7: JEWISH GRIEF / MOURNING RITUALS

Branches/Divisions of Judaism

Judaism was begun, maintained and transmitted by families – and, today, family unity and closeness is still one of the most important Jewish tenets. The original Jews consisted of the close-knit patriarchal families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Judaism does not stress belief in God as much as acceptance of God and the way of life that God has set forth for the adherent.³³

There are five branches of Judaism: Hasidism (ultra-conservative); Orthodox (very conservative, true to the Torah); Conservative (conservative and true to tradition with some adjustments); Reconstructionist (belief that Judaism is ever evolving); and Reform (progressive and liberal).³⁴

Sacred text

The ‘Torah’ consists of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The *Talmud* (in Hebrew means: “study”,

³³ Rabbi Alan L. Ponn, “Judaism” in *How Different Religions View Death and the Afterlife* eds., Christopher Jay Johnson and Marsha G. McGee, 145-159 (Philadelphia: The Charles Press, 1998), 145-146.

³⁴ Christopher Partridge, ed., *Introduction to World Religions* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2005), 273-76.

“teaching”) contains comprehensive commentary on the *Mishnah* (teachings of earlier rabbis), the principal text of rabbinic Judaism’s principal text.³⁵

Mourning Practice/Rituals

The details of grief and mourning observances may vary according to each Jewish branch/community. According to Ellen Levine, “Two of the most important commandments in Jewish tradition are to honor the dead and comfort the mourner.” She further states that, “We honor the dead by treating the body with respect, by accompanying the deceased to the cemetery, and honoring the memory of the deceased.”³⁶ Recently, I had the honor to meet with a family who although grieving the impending loss of their mom appeared comforted by the fact that her funeral plans were arranged and her body was to be flown to a cemetery in Israel, where the great biblical prophets are believed to be buried. Their plans really affirmed the concepts of honor for the dead, which appeared to give them solace.

Much like the other religions of Islam, and Christianity the deceased in Judaism is accompanied to the cemetery, but what is different is that the person is watched over immediately after death. A *shomer* (watcher or guard), preferably a family member or friend, stays with the body at all times. This custom may have originated from the need to protect the body from animals in the night, centuries ago. However, as Judaism considers an individual to have been created in God’s image, and that the body is the receptacle of the soul, the body is to be honored, respected, and guarded. It is considered

³⁵ Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 275.

³⁶ Levine “Jewish Views and Customs on Death,” in Colin Parkes, ed., 98-130, *Death and Bereavement*, 98.

an honor to be a *shomer*.³⁷ Paradoxically, my mother still tells the story of being a young private duty nurse who was in the home of a Jewish family whose young daughter died. When the patient died my mother informed the family of the patients death, and made preparations to leave, but was instructed to stay with the body as it could not be left unattended. In hindsight, I don't think my mother considered that an honor, but probably more spine chilling. The knowledge of other religious customs, however, breeds understanding, compassion, and empathy; as we seek to determine *can we mourn together those not born together.*

In the Jewish tradition, mourning for the passing of a loved one is marked with specific rituals. These are reflected in the first seven days, thirty days, and the first year of a loved ones death. According to Jewish law, one is obliged to mourn for the seven people who are considered immediate family members (father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter and spouse).³⁸ The first of which is called *shiva* or 'sitting *shiva*', which usually occurs after the burial of the deceased and lasts for a week (7 days). According to the book, *How to Be A Perfect Stranger*³⁹, the writers point out that the mirrors are covered at the home of the bereaved so that they may concentrate on mourning, and not on vanity. In addition some families sit on low stools, or sit on reversed seat cushions to show their grief and the torment of their loss and pain. What is also unique about 'sitting *shiva*' in Judaism is that it actually names a practice of rituals for grief and mourning where family and friends stop over to pay their respects and offer comfort to the bereaved

³⁷ Levine in, Parkes, *Death and Bereavement*, 104-105.

³⁸ Ibid,112.

³⁹ Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida, eds., *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* (Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2006) 153.

family. Although a similar practice occurs for Christians which is called a ‘wake’, there is no designated amount of time specified for one to grieve. A person usually ‘sits *shiva*’ after having lost a parent, spouse, sibling, or child. All other loved ones are also mourned, but the observances of *shiva* may not apply. Not long ago I had a Jewish family explain to me that in Judaism one mourns over the death of a parent for one year. But the death of a spouse is not so long, because family is imperative in their culture, and thus it is important for the grieving spouse to resume a normal life as quickly as possible so that the overall life of the family remains intact and thriving. That was an incredible concept. It is this type of interaction that makes each day so fascinating, as a chaplain.

The second period is the 30day period after the death when the mourner is restricted from attending most entertainment and formal community events.⁴⁰ During this thirty-day period, which includes *shiva* acts of shaving, hair cutting, and personal grooming generally are not done, out of respect for the dead, and the mourners deep grief. This 30-day period of grief is called *sheloshim*⁴¹. What is most interesting about these rituals is that as important as they are to the grief process they can be cancelled should the period of mourning fall on a religious holiday such as Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Passover, Sukkot or Shavuot.⁴² The Sabbath does not count as a day of shiva, as it is seen as a day of joy, and so the mourning rites are not observed on this day. Similarly, on festivals and other holidays the mourning rites are not observed, as they are in conflict

⁴⁰ Rabbi Alan L.Ponn, “Judaism” in How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife, 145-159, 156.

⁴¹ Levine in, Parkes, *Death and Bereavement*, 117.

⁴² Ibid,116.

with the joyous nature of the holiday.⁴³ This is affirmed by Rabbi Ponn who notes, “An important Jewish procedural rule for care and remembrance of the dead of the dead is that no funeral rites can take place on Sabbaths and holidays. There can be no funeral on the Sabbath or on the first day of a Jewish holiday and the mourner refrains from mourning during these periods.”⁴⁴ I don’t believe however that the Rabbi means that literally that the mourner refrains from mourning as know one can really assess the level of ones grief process. Interestingly, even in my faith tradition it is rare to hear of a funeral service scheduled for a Sunday. However, if one is held it is late in the evening, and the deceased usually is one of high standing in the religious community such as a pastor, or former pastor.

The third part of the Jewish ritual for grief is the 12th month, where many times the family gathers for the first time at the gravesite, for a brief memorial service, where a tombstone may be erected.

Most Jewish funerals take place at a funeral home or “funeral chapel” rather than a synagogue. When some one dies of the Jewish faith according to their tradition, and or practice many times a *cherva Khadisha* is contacted to perform the ritual washing of the deceased.⁴⁵ In a recent telephone call with the manager of a pastoral care department of a local hospital, I asked about the process of contacting this group. He stated, when an Orthodox Jewish family requests the services of such a group he has numbers to contact them, for the appropriate care of the deceased.

⁴³ Ibid, 116.

⁴⁴ Ponn, In Death and Afterlife, 157.

⁴⁵ Lucinda Mosher, Faith in the Neighborhood, (New York: Church Publishing, 2007),110-111.

Once the body is dressed/shrouded, the coffin (plain pine box) is sealed. The plain wooden box is symbolic of the Jewish belief that all are equal in the sight of God, whether rich or poor. In fact, some caregivers have shared with me that in Israel, at the burial site the deceased is actually removed from the coffin, and placed directly into the earth, where family actually then initiate the burying process. Ironically in Christianity, some people pay big money to honor the deceased with expensive coffins, as a tribute. I think of celebrities like James Brown, and Michael Jackson. I believe Mr. Browns casket was literally made of gold. Unlike Christianity, in Judaism there is no viewing of the body and no "open casket" at the funeral; the same practice applies to Islam, though the immediate family is allowed a visitation right, prior to the coffin being sealed to pay their final respects.

The Jewish funeral consists of a burial, in which the family participates in covering the deceased. It is believed that this is a way of honoring the dead by helping them return back to the earth. In some traditions the back of the shovel is used to indicate that although the person must be buried, there is no rush to fill the grave. Cremation is not an option for some although this is changing for some Jews, particularly as space for grave sites begins to diminish in some regions. I have heard it said by some adherents of the Jewish faith that some people are becoming Americanized and thus are moving away from some of the deep rooted traditions. Burial is considered to allow the body to decompose naturally, as consistent with biblical doctrine. For example, the *Torah* (Hebrew Bible) says, "Until you return to the ground- For from it you were taken. For dust you are, And to dust you shall return"⁴⁶ (Gen 3:19b). Interestingly in my ministers

⁴⁶ Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, Michael Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

handbook (used by most clergy in my Baptist faith tradition), there is a section for the Service of Committal, where it gives guidance/direction on how to conduct services at gravesites. The reading at the gravesite begins with, “For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of this world unto himself the soul of our deceased brother (or sister, or friend), we therefore commit his (or her) body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”⁴⁷ As seeds or off spring of Abraham both Jews and Christians share many similiarites that are biblical in nature. The Jewish Burial is intended to take place in as short an interval of time after death as possible which goes back to centuries ago where the high heat in the desert region caused body decomposition to occur most rapidly .

At the same time, an equal effort is made to keep the deceased very much alive in the heart of the family and friends. Children are often named after the deceased to keep their memory alive. This came up during the ‘Can We Mourn’ workshop where an audience member proudly stated that she was very close to her grandmother, who in her honor acquired her grandmothers Hebrew name after death, subsequent to consulting with their rabbi.

Jewish Eschatology

As I researched this topic there is a vast amount of material available regarding Judaism and its belief in the afterlife, and resurrection of the soul and or body. However, as I deal with many people of the Jewish faith as a hospice chaplain those views rarely service or come up. As I have read and witnessed myself, many Jews appear more concerned with issues of today, and less with issues of the afterlife. One term that comes

⁴⁷ Edward T. Hiscox, *The Star Book for Ministers* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994), 191.

up often in my readings is that of *mitzvot*, which means good deeds. And for many Jews life is about the good deeds or the merits of your actions in this world. Seemingly one could ask, “what did you do to impact this world, to make it a better place”? The other thing about *mitzvot* is that it really seems to be about what you can do for others, without expecting anything else in turn. I am reminded of a story told of how a dying Jewish mother when she was young was sent by her grandmother to a neighbors house to assess what they had to eat. When the little girl returned she told her grandmother that they had potatoe pancakes, but no oil to fry them in. The grandmother sent the little girl back to the neighbors house and again asked, “tell me what do they have to eat”? And again the little girl came back with the same answer. Her grandmother collected food, and money from her friends who were somewhat well to do, and never told them what she was collecting the items for. They then left the food and money on the doorstep of their neighbor without fanfare or identification. That was a true example of *mitzvot* in its highest form. So for this Jewish family what they have gathered from their grandmothers true life is that life is about how you treat others. For the numerous Jewish families that I have encountered over the past several years, issues of the next life or an afterlife are of little importance.

Rabbi Stuart W. Gershon wrote a sermon abstract on November 17, 2006, called, “What Jewish Spirituality Teaches About Afterlife”⁴⁸. He posed in it the following question,

⁴⁸ Rabbi Stuart W. Gershon, <http://www.templesinainj.org/content/sermons/pdf/2006-11-17-Sermon.pdf> (assessed 5/5/10)

“Does it surprise you to learn that Judaism asserts a belief in afterlife”? He goes on to explain that, “Some of us have been taught that Judaism has no such concept. Some of us have been taught that Judaism is exclusively a ‘this-worldly’ religion while Christianity is exclusively an ‘other worldly’ religion. In truth, both religions have been misrepresented to you, and in a few moments, I’ll explain why.” He goes on to explain that, “Ever since the 18th century, when Jews fled the ghetto and began a wholesale abandonment of Jewish ritual observance, the focus of Jewish identity had no choice but to shift from ritual practice to theological belief. In other words, if Jews no longer practiced their religion differently than Christians, than all that is left to make Jews different is theological beliefs. If Christians believe in afterlife, Jews cannot. It was that simple. It was solely for the purpose of stemming the tide of Jewish assimilation that some of us were taught that Judaism has no belief in afterlife.”

Rabbi Gershon makes a strong point for Judaism’s belief in the afterlife, and the attached story from Rabbi Zamir, adds to the point without being overly theological, but rather more poignant in his story telling approach. A recent story from Rabbi Simcha Zamir, (from his e-mail ‘*Weekly Thoughts*’⁴⁹, to his congregation and friends.)

From our Sages: Rabbi Jacob used to say: This world is but a vestibule before the world to come (*Pirkei Avot* - Ethics of the Fathers 4:21).

A *tzaddik* (a righteous man, in Judaism) was once visited by a wealthy merchant. Upon seeing the *tzaddik*’s meager living quarters, with one room serving as the bedroom, kitchen, dining room, and study, the merchant offered to acquire more spacious accommodations for him. "Why, in my home," said the merchant, "I have separate rooms for eating, sleeping, receiving guests, and so on." "And when you are on the road," asked the *tzaddik*, "do you also have separate rooms for each function?"

"No," answered the merchant. "When I am on the road, I have only one room in a hotel." "I, too, have spacious accommodations in my permanent home," said the *tzaddik*. "But I am only a traveler in this world, and while on the road, one room is sufficient."

Clearly, this story supports the concept of an afterlife in Judaism.

⁴⁹ Rabbi Simcha Zamir, E-Mail ‘*Weekly Thoughts*’, rebsimmy@gmail.com (accessed 2/17/10)

CHAPTER 8: ISLAMIC GRIEF / MOURNING RITUALS

Branches/Divisions of Islam

The Prophet Muhammad around the year 630 A.D. founded Islam. When he died, two factions developed as to who should be his successor. These factions, which still exist today, are known as the *Sunni* and the *Shi'a* (also known as the *Shiites*). Most of the world's Muslims are *Sunnis* (85 percent). There is also a smaller sect of Islam called *Sufi*, which represents a more mystical tradition.⁵⁰ The word “*Islam*” means submission, or obedience to the will of *Allah* (God). People in the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa, China, Indonesia, Central Asia, India, and American to just name a few regions practice Islam, and thus it is difficult at best to capture fully all of their rituals for death and bereavement because of the global spectrum of cultures and traditions embedded by each province.

Sacred text

The *Qur'an* (*Koran*) contains the basis for *Islamic* doctrine. It is about four-fifths the length of the New Testament, and is divided into 114 surahs (chapters). The *surahs* are arranged in the *Qur'an* by length- the longer in front, and the shorter in back.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Fosarelli, *Prayers & Rituals*, 56.

⁵¹ Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 387.

Beliefs

Muslims believe that God (*Allah*) is one, the creator of all. He is sovereign and provides all things; a believer's life belongs to him. Allah wills all that happens in a person's life. Thus, religious Muslims do not complain about life since that would be a complaint against Allah. They also do not show fear, as that would demonstrate a lack of faith and a lack of submission to Allah.⁵² Muslims believe in angels, special messengers, and prophets, the last great prophet being Mohammad.⁵³

According to Jane Idleman Smith, "For all Muslims, men, and women, certain duties and responsibilities are clearly set forth. 1) Giving verbal testimony based on assent of the heart that there is no God but God (acknowledging divinity in any being or reality outside the one God is the greatest sin in Islam and leads with certainty to damnation) and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. This is the *shahadah*, the basic testimony of faith. 2) Participating in the public prayer (*salat*) at five regularly scheduled times during the day. 3) Participating in the fast (*saum*) observed during one month of the year (*Ramadan*). 4) Sharing one's material goods with the needy of the community through paying the alms-tax (*zakat*). 5) Joining with other members of the community at least once in a lifetime in the great pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.⁵⁴

I am reminded of my past in the New York City Correction department when during the time of Ramadan, the inmates would gather at certain times in the evening for

⁵² Neville Kirkwood, *A Hospital Handbook on Multiculturalism and Religion* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1993), 37.

⁵³ Partridge, *Introduction to World Religions*, 372-375.

⁵⁴ Smith, "Islam" in How different Religions View Death, 134.

prayer and gathering, where I believe they ate late in the day after sundown.

Unbeknownst to me I also remember many years ago blowing my car horn to ask someone if they were vacating their parking space. What I did not realize was that the man was in prayer. I can still recall vividly how he placed his hands before his face. When he turned to me I could see that he was in the act of prayer, and that he was a Muslim. A Muslim friend of mine took his pilgrimage to Mecca in 2008. And he shared the stories of seeing God in revelatory moments that he will never ever forget. Many of the thoughts that he had read about in the Qur'an took on new meaning for him after that trip. One of my favorite cousins died several years ago, and he followed the Muslim faith. I am saddened that he never got to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam by going to Mecca. As I look at Islam from this new lens I can see the earnestness of those who follow this religion. I think of the late Malcolm X who after his pilgrimage to Mecca saw Islam with a new prospective; not just as an avenue for black people to avert the religious dogma's of the time, but rather saw Islam as a faith that embraced all people regardless of skin tone, or placement in the world. A faith nestled in the truth of submission and peace, and not of oppression of others who are dissimilar. It was this spiritual awakening, that led to his demise from the nation of Islam, and ultimately his assassination.

Mourning Prayers

When a patient is dying, the following may be said:

There is no God but *Allah*, the Forebearing, the Generous. There is no God but Allah, the High, the Grand. Praise be to *Allah*, the Lord of the Seven Heavens and the Seven Earths and what is in them, between them, and beneath them. And the Lord of the great Throne, and praise belongs to God, the Lord of the universe.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Kirkwood, *A Hospital Handbook*, 132.

When death is imminent, the dying person (facing *Mecca*, if possible) says:

Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me and unite me with the Most High Companion. None is worthy of praise beside *Allah*. Surely death has many hardships and difficulties. O *Allah*, help me in overcoming the throes and difficulties of death.⁵⁶

Once death has occurred, those in attendance pray:

O *Allah*, forgive [NAME]; and raise him/her status in [in *Jannah* –the Garden] among the rightly guided people; and be his/her representative among his/her people who he/she has left behind and forgive us and him/her. O sustainer of the worlds. And (O *Allah*) make his/her grave vast and accommodating and fill it with light (noor).⁵⁷

Mourning Practice/Rituals

After death, Muslims try to have the body buried as soon as possible, although sometimes that is impossible if an autopsy must be done. Muslims abhor any desecration of the body (analogous to Judaism), so most Muslims would not agree to an autopsy. A Muslim funeral lasts between thirty to sixty minutes and occurs two to three days after death. The site is at a funeral home or the home of the deceased, and the casket (always wooden) is never open, like in Judaism. The officiant is an *Imam* (Muslim religious leader) who reads from the *Qur'an*. Mourners wear dark colors, much like in Christianity as a sign of respect, and non-Muslims should not wear signs of their own faith tradition. Male mourners are separated from female mourners.⁵⁸

In the book, *Loss*, its author Lucinda Mosher points out that, “ In Islam, there are instructions given to Muslims about how the dead person should be handled. One of the most important things to be concerned with is that the deceased has to be handled with

⁵⁶ Kirkwood, *Hospital Handbook*, 132-33.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁸ Garces-Foley, *Death and Religion*, 163.

much dignity and respect.” Further she asserts that, “Interestingly, even in American cities with dense Muslim populations, there are very few Islamic funeral homes. Instead, Muslim communities tend to seek out a local funeral home that is willing to accommodate Islamic practices around preparation of the body for burial.” I am reminded of a dear friend who has been a Muslim for the past thirty years. His wife is a Christian and I once asked him about what would happen to him should he die as they have different faith beliefs. He stated without giving it a second thought, she knows who to contact and the brothers will take care of everything. He said it with such conviction, that I knew his thoughts to be true and sincere. I am reminded of the grand Muslim mosque that I believe was located on 116th street, in Harlem, New York. Thriving amidst that area were numerous funeral homes, which I am sure, accommodated those of the Muslim faith, upon the time of death. In her article, “*Islam*” Dr. Smith points out that, “One of the most important components of the Islamic funerary process is the washing of the body. Cleanliness and ritual purification are essential in Islam; prayer is always preceded by ablutions.” She includes, “The washing is done by a professional washer at home, at a hospital, or in a special place outside the mosque.”⁵⁹ The similarities between the Islamic rituals for the deceased and Jews is almost uncanny. Can we mourn together those not born together, takes on a deeper meaning as we begin to see earnestly that as the fruits of Abraham’s seed we are all of the same family of God.

One of the other things that are very important for Muslims is the forgiveness of sins. Gerdien Jonker in, “*The many facets of Islam*” points out, “To the Muslim mind, it

⁵⁹ Jane Idleman Smith, “Islam” in *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife*, Christopher J. Johnson, Marsha G. McGee, eds., 132-144, 136.

is not good to leave the dying person alone. Many people come to forgive the dying for their sins and in return want to be given forgiven.”⁶⁰

Muslim Eschatology

In the Qur'an in Surah (chapter) 3 verse 185 it states, “Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of life): for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.” This is supported in the book, *How Different Religions View Death & Afterlife*,⁶¹ on page 134 where it is stated; “Muslim children are taught from an early age that life on this earth has no purpose if it is not to prepare oneself specifically for life in the next and that to live ethically in recognition of God’s oneness is virtually to assure a felicitous hereafter in the gardens of paradise.” This seems to imply that Muslims do believe in the notion of Heaven and Hell, as fire and paradise are often mentioned as symbols of each place.

The Muslim view of the afterlife includes a universal belief in a final Day of Reckoning, when all people will be called upon to give account for their actions.⁶² This was pointed out by Dr. Ali al-Ramah, who stated during the ‘Can We Mourn Together’ workshop, “There is no need to fight over which religion is wrong or right for at the day of judgment we shall all know the truth”. Muslims also believe that the time of judgment is preordained by God but unknown to man. Much like Christianity where there is a scripture that states, “no one knows the day or the hour” for Jesus Christ’s return/arrival.

⁶⁰ Gerdien Jonker, “The many facets of Islam” in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, eds., Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani, Bill Young, 147-165 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 163.

⁶¹ Ibid, 134.

⁶² Matlins, *Perfect Stranger*, 121.

Because faith in God is so paramount in the Islamic faith prayers over the dead and dying are important as some believe that prayers are necessary to thwart the attempt of evil from engulfing the deceases spirit and taking them to a hell that is insurmountable. *Iblis* in the Islamic tradition is a fallen archangel⁶³, as described in Christianity as Satan, Lucifer, or simply the devil. There is a point just after death where many Muslims believe that the temptor *Iblis* comes to take the persons soul or spirit. In line with this, according to Jonker, The five final questions every believer of Islam must answer after death are: Who is your God? Ans. My God is *Allah*, Who is your prophet? Ans. My prophet is Muhammad, Which is your book? Ans. My book is the *Quran*. Who is your Imam? My Imam is _____. And which is your *qibla* (prayer direction)? My *qibla* is Mecca.⁶⁴

⁶³ Smith, “Islam” in How Different Religions View, 135.

⁶⁴ Jonker, “The many facets of Islam”, in Death and Bereavement, 158.

CHAPTER 9: CHRISTIAN GRIEF / MOURNING RITUALS

Branches/Divisions of Christianity

The numbers of denominations that fall under the umbrella of Christianity are too plentiful to name here, without omitting some erroneously. With each denomination comes their own customs/traditions in grief, mourning rituals and practice. To just name a few Christian faith groups would include: the Assemblies of God, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutheran, Methodist, Mormon, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, United Church of Christ, etc. The three branches of Christianity can be defined as Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant.

Sacred text

The Holy Bible, which consists of 66 books. 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 books in the New Testament.

Mourning Prayers/Scriptures

Will vary based on denomination, and branch.

Recently, I performed a funeral for a family that focused on 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 1 Corinthians 15:57(NRSV). But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable,

always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58-59 NRSV).

For some it could be Psalms 23.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

Mourning Practice/Rituals

Under the Eastern Orthodox, the Funeral is one of the shortest Orthodox services. It only lasts about forty-five minutes but may be considerably longer if there is a large congregation because many of those present will prostrate themselves before the dead person (in recognition that the body is a temple) and then kiss the cross. Non-Orthodox are welcome to attend but need not prostrate themselves.⁶⁵ Burial or cremation is permitted. If there is a burial, a Service of Interment takes place at the graveside following which family and friends drop earth on the coffin while moving their hands to make the sign of the cross.⁶⁶

For many Protestant religions funeral services usually take place about a week after death, but can be longer if they are waiting for friends and relatives from out of state or the country. They often include a eulogy or tribute to the dead person, which may be spoken by a clergy person or by a friend of the deceased. Prayers, readings, and hymns are individualized and can be selected by the clergy, family, or friends; or if preplanned can be performed as determined by the deceased.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the funeral for a long time member of my Baptist church whose family had selections sung from her favorite hymns, which was really beautiful and moving.

Today many families hold memorials instead of funerals, as cremation is a creative option for many families restricted to tight budgets; additionally some people desire to be more earth friendly. I had one patient who wanted his ashes sprinkled on his

⁶⁵ Parkes, *Death and Bereavement*, 138-139.

⁶⁶ Parkes, *Death and Bereavement*, 138.

favorite golf course. In fact, I heard not too long ago that in some states warehouse stores like Costco, and BJ's sell caskets, which no doubt undercuts mortician fees.

For many Protestants and Catholics rituals vary, depending on culture, custom, and geographical location.

Christian Eschatology

Part of one's Christian theology of grief is found in their understanding of the afterlife. For many Christians their thoughts often surround the Rapture, Christ's Second Coming, and the Millennium. Because there are numerous thoughts, ideologies, and opinions on Christian Eschatology, I will not begin to exhaust them at this time, as no result will enhance the goals of this demonstration project. Many Christians believe however, that "to be absent of the body is to be present with the Lord." This theology can bring great comfort to those facing the issues of death and dying. Another popular saying in my faith is that, "Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal".

In the book of Matthew, chapter 17 there is the story of Jesus' Transfiguration. In verses 1-3 it states:

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

For many Christians this pericope clearly indicates that there is life after death, a resurrection to come. Moses and Elijah are both men from the Old Testament who find themselves in the context of the New Testament with Jesus Christ. Moses couldn't step foot in the Promised Land, yet he was in the presence of the Lord in this verse.

In fact, the book of Deuteronomy 4:6 states, "Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day." Verse seven

states Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. Yet the disciples see him clearly with Jesus in the book of Matthew, chapter 17. And according to the book 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, but was later seen by the disciples in the presence of the Lord. So Christians have many biblical scriptures and beliefs to influence and support their viewpoints on the afterlife.

Several months ago, I had a pastoral care visit with a hospice patient and her friend. At the conclusion of my visit they asked that we pray for a dear friend of theirs who did not believe in Jesus Christ. They were really concerned about their friend's soul as it relates to her either going to Heaven or Hell. In hospice care, I meet regularly with caregivers whose concept of the afterlife plays an important part in how they deal with grief and mourning.

Not long ago, I had a caretaker whose wife was dying from cancer. They had been married for fifty-five years. He stated that he was happy that he never told his wife 'no,' as she often depended on him for transportation because in their early years she did not drive. He told me a funny story. It seems that this man was an avid reader and admirer of 'Detective' novels. He mentioned that when one robs a bank, the driver of the vehicle is an accessory to the crime. Well he suggested that since his wife did not drive and he drove her when she went to communion, or to serve the sick, or shopping for others, he considered himself an accessory to her being a blessing to others, so that although he was not a church attendee his actions accounted for something.

Even though he had entered the anticipatory grief process, he was looking at his own soul salvation and relationship with the Lord. Reconciliation for some with God is an essential component of how they deal with their own grief, and relationship with the

Divine. It is the Christians relationship with God and belief in the afterlife, which names the funeral services in some Christian communities as ‘Home Going Services’.

Ironically several years ago I met a patient’s son who had converted from Judaism to Catholicism because of issues of the afterlife. This gentleman had questions regarding the afterlife, which for him Judaism he stated did not answer. He had met a Catholic Bishop who answered all his questions and concerns and thus he converted. Conversely, I met a woman who was a Jehovah Witness, who converted from being Catholic because Catholicism for her did not answer her spiritual life questions.

The issues of the afterlife are fundamental for how some govern and live their lives. I have met many families over the years in Hospice who have voiced happiness, or a sense of ease in knowing that upon death a loved one would be reunited with sisters, brothers, parents, or spouse and assorted others. This belief appears to breed a sense of peace and relief for many.

It would appear that we can “mourn together those not born together” when we can begin to sympathize with the pain of death which we must all succumb to at one point or another in our lives. A mother I met over a year ago whose daughter was dying from cancer at the age of forty-nine said, “God gave me my daughter and I am going to be here until the end to give her back to God.” It is that belief in the Lord and in the afterlife that gives some family members consolation as they cope with the impending death of a loved one.

Some patients who have conversations with the dead, or see those who have previously died may be afforded a hope in an afterlife, and an understanding that death may bring reconciliation with family members long gone. This may help bring about

reassurance, and solace during the more normative grief process of feeling oneself slipping away.

Eschatology, the aspect of the biblical doctrine that deals with “last things,” is the foundation for the last book in the bible, ‘Revelation’. Although theologians differ in their exegesis of the text with its words and symbols there is no doubt that Christians around the world are influenced by its thoughts of the afterlife. Mourning takes on a different symbolism for some caregivers as they sit by the side of a dying loved one, attempting to come to grips with their grief, heartache, and pain. For some, the thought of seeing a loved one again; or hearing them speak to those long gone brings comfort that there is another life, and that death on this side of the earth, may not be the final step or journey.

As a chaplain I have heard many people describe their near death experience of seeing a very bright light while enthroned between the atmosphere of life and death. Some have heard the voice of loved ones on the other side saying, “Their time on earth is not yet up.” Some have spoken of seeing loved ones on the other side, and a Heaven that is nothing like the earth in beauty.

I had another patient describe the sensation of being on a roller coaster, which was going down, but was interrupted by a bright light, a dove, and a ball of light, which centered itself over his bed. From the moment of that dream, his life took a renewed form, and he recovered from his near death experience. He has since given his life to the Lord, as a Christian.

CHAPTER 10: SEMINAR/WORKSHOP: CAN WE MOURN TOGETHER

“The Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together” workshop was held on December 4, 2009, at the Hospice Care Network, Woodbury, New York office. It started at 10:00 a.m.

I. Introduction of the Workshop:

I first introduced myself as a Chaplain at the Hospice Care Network, and a Doctorate in Ministry candidate at the New York Theological Seminary (NYTS). I then announced my demonstration project and its theme, “Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together” looking at the perspectives of grief and mourning as it relates to the three main religious groups Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Next I introduced the panelists Dr. Ali-al Rahman, Pastor Jim Barnum, and Rabbi Simcha Zamir.

Note: The introduction was recorded prior to the arrival of the panelists and the audience.

II. Panelist Self introduction:

First I had the panelists introduce themselves. We started with Dr. Ali-al Rahman, who is a professor in the department of Criminal Justice at Nassau County Community College. Ali and I worked together in the mid 1980’s, in the New York City Department of Correction training academy where I was an instructor/correction officer and he was my supervisor (captain).

A couple of years ago as a chaplain I was assigned to do outreach to various faith groups in my vicinity. One day while on assignment at the Islamic Center of Long

Island, I ran into Ali during the Friday, Jumma prayer. It was from that meeting that we reconnected and kept in touch. When I saw Ali that day, I knew that Islam was a religion of love, because that's how I always saw him. A man full of love and compassion for others, with no hidden agenda's but merely a heart.

Ali introduced himself as not a clergy person; and asked the audience not to expect anything theological from him. Ali, Jim, and Simcha all came to my spirit for this workshop. At first as I discussed the workshop with my site team it was suggested by some that I invite a Priest as most of the audience would most likely be Catholic. I pondered that for a couple of months and did in fact reach out to a priest. I had left a message for him, and did not receive a return phone call.

As I contemplated the goals for this demonstration project one of the big things that jumped out was that I wanted people to be educated on the topic of the religious other in the area of grief and mourning. The goal was not to reinforce beliefs already garnered. So I did not pursue the addition of a priest to the panel. (See notes in the appendix) In hindsight, I realize that it was a good choice to stick with the chosen three for the flow of time, interest, and stories.

Each panelist came with his own talents and gifts, which blended well with the theme of the seminar. I wasn't looking for scholarly interpretations of sacred texts from the 'religious other'. Rather I wanted earnestly for the audience and myself to glean the nuances of other faiths that we may not often be privy to, in a way that would be honest, true, compassionate, and real. As employees in the work of hospice there is not a day that goes by that a family, or member of staff is not befuddled by grief, immersed in a

religion that one may not understand, thus I really wanted this workshop to be educational yet interesting in nature.

Ali concluded that his take on grief and mourning from his Muslim religious perspective would be experientially based on his own life experiences. I could not have desired more.

Next Jim Barnum introduced himself as clergy, ordained on April 26, 1987, and the Pastor of the Bellmore Presbyterian Church where he has served for twenty years. Jim also spoke of his role as a part time Chaplain at Franklin Hospital.

At Franklin hospital, the Hospice Care Network has a seven-bed unit where we serve our patients. Although we have our own chaplain assigned to it, I was aware of his role there and pastorate in Bellmore through a mutual friend and colleague.

The fact that he was a trained chaplain suggested to me that he would be a good mix in this seminar. It was my hope that Jim as a trained chaplain and pastor would be able to bridge theology and humanity in a way that would be authentic to the HCN audience. When I first talked with Jim regarding this project he was very open and cordial. When I met with him at Franklin Hospital he fully embraced the project, its theme and offered suggestions in format such as letting the Rabbi go first as our biblical reference text would be coming from the book of Genesis. Jim did an outstanding job.

Lastly, Rabbi Simcha Zamir introduced himself and told the audience I would much prefer if you just call me ‘Simmy.’ “Like Ali,” he stated, “I would like to be considered just a regular guy,” Simcha stated, “I might be clergy, I might be Rabbi but for this seminar to work we have to be on equal footing.” He then announced that he is the Rabbi at temple Sholom in Westbury; which is a conservative synagogue. He

identified himself as an Orthodox Rabbi, wherein his congregants are part of the reformed movement.

Several years ago, I offered pastoral care to a family whose mother was on the hospice program. The son declined pastoral care as their Rabbi visited frequently with the family. The patient's son spoke so highly of the Rabbi, I knew that I had to meet him. I asked the son about this incredible Rabbi and it was Simcha. From the first time I spoke to Simcha we were like kindred spirits. I invited him to the Hospice Care Network where he met with Jerry Calhoun, my supervisor and manager of the Pastoral care department and myself.

Simcha and I have kept in touch ever since, and I have visited his temple on numerous occasions. One of the highlights of his introduction is that he lived in Israel for 13 years where he had the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of his six children as they were growing up; which was important in his own development as a Rabbi.

Earlier in the course of planning this seminar, I had discussed with a site team member his developing a case study for the panelists to discuss during the workshop. He agreed and thought that it would be a good idea. Nonetheless as I followed up with him a few weeks later he disclosed that because of his workload he would not be able to develop the case study. As God would have it during my normal bible devotion reading I ran across the story of Joseph and how his brothers put him into a pit. What jumped out for me was the grief of his father Jacob who thought that his son had been killed by a wild animal. But the mourning and burden that Jacob felt was really painful. And as I pondered the story it became clear that it was an excellent story for the panelists, as it

serves as a narrative in all three-faith groups. And thus this Genesis tale became the focus for the panelists to explore from their religious viewpoints. (See appendix notes.)

III. Biblical story Introduction:

Joseph's brothers put him in a pit and later sell him, and plot to tell his father Jacob that a wild animal may have killed him, in order to get rid of him, because of their jealousy over him as the favored child.

So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son's tunic or not?" And he recognized it and said, "*It is* my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him (Genesis 37:31-35 NKJV).

IV. Workshop Dialogue

The workshop dialogue began with Rabbi Simcha Zamir as suggested in a previous discussion with Jim Barnum. The rabbi pointed out that the story is really more about Jacob than it is about Joseph, as it relates to grief and mourning.

He goes on to state that as it relates to marriage and relationships many times people will ask questions like where did you meet, how did you meet, and when did you know regarding your love and emotions for one another. But he points out quite eloquently no one ever asks, "When did you first fall in love with your child"? This was a pivotal moment in the workshop for we immediately took off into an area of reality, and deep feelings that I don't think any of us were prepared for.

That question still lingers in my head as a father, son, chaplain, and preacher because it is a question that most people can relate to but have probably never pondered

nor neither thought about before. The inquiry of what was it that attracted you to your child he continues never comes up, as opposed to those same questions being asked to individuals in a relationship. “No one has ever asked,” he continued, “Was the love he felt for his children love at first sight?” (Side bar note: unbeknownst to the Rabbi there was a member in the audience who lost a daughter several years ago to suicide. So you can imagine how she felt hearing about the love that a parent feels for a child that is never asked about, yet deeply felt.)

“The relationship between a parent and a child is different, it is much deeper,” he stated. One of the things I really appreciated about the panelists is that they really came prepared. Simcha’s dialogue took time to contemplate and labor over. He obviously did not enter into this seminar taking the pain and sorrows connected with grief and mourning lightly.

How many times have we looked at that scripture of Joseph and his brothers and thought about the heartache of Jacob? As Simcha spoke you could hear a pin drop in the room as the people were really savoring his every word.

The next point that came up was that Jacob never really recovered from the loss of Joseph, and thus he was never ever able to be consoled. Simcha suggested that he did not think that there was any one religion or formula to deal with the grief of a child. As a clergy he noted, you do your best to help families but you know that on a certain level, you are going to fail and are not going to be a major success. Thus Rabbi Simcha Zamir ended his dialogue.

The question was raised from the audience, “Do you ever tell families and parents that this (loss and grief) will be with you for the rest of your life? Simcha’s response

was, “Absolutely, for knowing that they may never fully recover helps them to get through it.”

As moderator, I raised the issue of the head versus the heart. How do some people say things to the bereaved that sound good to the head, but do little or nothing for the heart? I directed this portion to the manager of the bereavement department as I have had numerous meetings with her regarding my D.Min. project and this was part of our last conversation. She elaborated that when we talk to people who are grieving we talk to their heads and say things like, “at least they are not in pain anymore”, or some suggest that, “the person is in a better place.” Logically she stated that may be true, but it doesn’t help the fact that the loved one’s heart is broken.

Yes it is argued by some, we are happy that they are not in pain, but now we are suffering and in pain because of their death; and thus she stated people, especially parents, get angry.

She emphasized as the Rabbi pointed out, that it is important to validate people’s feelings, giving them permission to recognize that they are never going to be the same. In response to the Bereavement managers comments the Rabbi countered that, “we have to be careful with the use of clichés”. He stated that, “you have to give people credit for knowing that you are BS-ing them with the clichés”. When you tell people that they are in a better place he asked, what does that really mean? Does that mean that planet earth is lousy? What does that say about where we are now? And they have to live in the now. “The better place,” Simcha said, “does not help them.” He added you cannot belittle and demean where we are now, by telling the grievers that their loved one is in a better place.

You have to have concern for the person who is in pain, and left behind to manage their angst.

Next, Pastor Jim Barnum gave us his take on the scripture as it relates to grief, mourning, and bereavement. He told of how he related to this story on a very personal level, as Joseph was the favored one. And he (Jim) was the only male in his family amongst three sisters, so he was no doubt favored by his father, at least as told to him by his sisters. He then spoke about how his mom died at the age of 40 when he was only 12 years old. He further talked about family dysfunction, and triangulation as Edwin H. Friedman, wrote about in his book, *Generation-to-Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*.

As Pastor Jim looks at the deceitfulness of this family in the scriptures, he sees a dysfunctional family system. This was one of the strengths I envisioned in Pastor Jim as his training in chaplaincy would allow him to look beyond the scriptural text, but also into the marrows of his own being, and the scholarly works of others in the realm of family dynamics and structure.

He talked about the death of a parent or stepparent, but the death of a child was something that he stated he could not begin to fathom. He stated that to lose a child really brings up the question of where is God, in the midst of the pain. He talked about the advocacy of chaplaincy. He mentioned that there is but thirteen inches between the head and the heart. He stated that it is important to sit with people through their pain and not to try and answer their questions of why. Be genuine and authentic with the grieved, he suggested. He talked about his training in the issues of death and dying, and how he has learned to just be silent, with people in their sorrow.

He stated, “it is not good to tell people that if there is anything I can do give me a call”. He said that is probably the worst thing you can do because it puts the burden back on them, the mourners.

He summed up by talking about the role of a chaplain in helping one find comfort and peace: how a chaplain may not cure your illness or repair your injury, but can help heal the pains in your heart. A chaplain may not solve your dilemmas but may help you relieve your anxieties. There were several chaplains in the audience that I am sure felt affirmed in their roles.

Next we heard from Dr. Ali al-Rahman, who acknowledged Pastor Jims statements on reaching out to a chaplain in dealing with grief. He further gave credit to the Rabbi and stated, that in counseling you have to be real, in dealing with the reality of a given grief situation. Then Ali stated that he would look at grieving from his perspective when he dealt with the death of his wife back in 1991, a story that he had told me several months earlier as I was planning this workshop.

After he told me the story I told him that it would be great to share at the seminar, but he stated, “No, that’s too personal.” So when he started to share his story on grief, I knew that it meant a great deal to him, and yet because of the openness of the other panelists he felt comfortable to share his story. I was honored by that and hoped that the audience would embrace his story.

He began by saying that he did not loose a child, but he does have seven children and he lost a wife. He talked about how people commented his wife is in a better place, or would say things like don’t forget about the here after.

He spoke about how other people asked about his youngest children, asking things like, “what’s going to happen to the kids,” or “what are you going to do with the children?” So rather than have an opportunity to mourn he was bombarded by questions of caring for others while his heart was still broken, and his wife, had not even been buried yet. He talked about how he as well as the children required bereavement care, and how he found that it was important to take each day at a time so as not to become overwhelmed.

Next Ali went into the biblical narrative telling how Jacob had told Joseph his son, not to tell his brothers about his dream. From the Islamic prospective there were eleven stars bowing down to Joseph who was the twelfth child. He then tied this story to the story of a woman who lost a daughter to a hit and run driver several weeks prior to the workshop. “What can you say to this lady whose daughter is struck by a hit and run driver right before her face and dies? What words of comfort can you bring to her, when this horror has happened right in front of her? How can you bring comfort to this mother, he poses?”

He talked about the importance of counseling to cope with the grief. Without counseling he suggested that the grief would just start eating at you, hurt you and kill you. He stated that the people you talk with must be empathetic.

He was asked if there was anything in Islam that he used to help comfort his daughters? He stated that he used parables of the afterlife. For example, when people die they don’t age anymore. When they are on the other side people are in a perpetual age of 30 for the rest of eternity.

When asked where he got that from, he laughed and stated, “I don’t remember!” The audience chuckled, as well. One of the most notable things about how people mourn and grieve is that children do not forget stories told. Ali stated that on the most recent Thanksgiving holiday, his daughter asked him if he remembered telling her about how everyone stays at the age of 30 upon death, as she is now over 30. He said, “yes, and you are going to come back at thirty again.”

We laughed, but it was a great reminder of how we hold on to stories that we revere especially when coping with the loss of loved ones. He concluded that when one experiences trauma and grief, it is always wise to seek chaplains who can talk to you and counsel you. He stated this from experience. “This has nothing to do with the Bible, Qur’ān, or the Torah; you have to have someone to speak to.” His statement seems to imply for him that perhaps we can mourn together those not born together. That maybe it is not about the religious other, but the commonality of the human spirit, which feels pain, and anguish in the midst of grief and mourning.

Ali made a reference to the bereavement manager in her distinction between issues of the head versus the heart. He countered that we are measured by what is in our hearts. He elaborated, that we talk about people going to Heaven, and each religion has its version or vision of paradise. He stated that each religion says if you don’t believe me, you are not going. He argued that the scriptures don’t say that. It says “that people who are righteous, who are good and who have a kind heart are those who will be entering paradise.”

It doesn’t matter what religion you are. He asked, “And do we argue about this?” He replied, “We shouldn’t because the last argument will be on the day of judgment,

where we will all find out who is right and who is wrong". He concluded, "So it doesn't make sense to argue down here."

Issues of the after life were raised after this, as I shared how a patient whom I had recently visited desired prayers for a friend who was not a Christian. The fact that she had not made Jesus her Lord and Savior was a serious concern for the patient. It was noted however that you do not need faith to grieve, just a heart.

A chaplain member of the audience raised the issue that for many people, God is in control. He knew us from the womb and will keep us safe. So that when a child, spouse, or life partner dies how do you answer that from your religious viewpoint?

Before the question was answered the Rabbi wanted to address Ali's statement about the car accident and the Jacob story. Simcha raised the issue of 'guilt', as it relates to grief and mourning as Jacob sent Joseph to go check on his brothers. In the case of the car accident he surmised that the woman might be feeling, "Oh, if I didn't go out, or run across the street, this tragedy never would have happened."

He further prefaced his thoughts by saying that as clergy, chaplains, and health care providers, and end of life professionals this is an extremely important aspect that we have to deal with. The sense of guilt can really impact ones grief.

Theologically, Simcha brought up the case of a family whose young child died in the hospital. One person told the grief stricken congregant, "You know that when you die, God is going to have a lot to answer for." The question was surmised, that might be the case, but are you willing to accept the answer? As the question was pondered, "Where is God, or where was God," the Rabbi's response was, "Ask Him." "Prayer is not just praising God, but it is communication," Simcha continued. "If you are angry or

ticked off with God,” the Rabbi suggested, “you tell Him, take it up with Him.” Dialogue is a central theme for Simcha, but he asks the question as well, “are our ears open to hear what He says?”

Next the issue of anger with God was raised, as well as conversations with God. Pastor Jim stated that he has learned that often the most important thing is not to answer the question. Sometimes he suggested, people ask questions that they don’t even remember, and may get mad over your response.

“Deep grief,” he continued, “does not often require answers to questions, but just the knowledge that someone is listening.” In addition Jim shared that when his mother died, the priest did not go to the cemetery. The funeral director said the prayers, and for the next ten years her father asked the question, “where was the priest?” That experience molded Jim to be a pastor who spends time with families in their grief, as he saw firsthand the impact of not spending that time on his father. So that really informed how he cares for congregants.

Again that is one of the bonuses in having a trained chaplain as part of the seminar. A board certified chaplain is taught to process life experiences in ways that may be fruitful and life transforming, as opposed to just bad experiences with horrific memories.

Jim really highlighted the importance of pastoral presence with a grieving family. He also talked about the use of scriptures at the burial, and how they can be comforting, from his Presbyterian viewpoint. He also mentioned how it is important to ‘sit *shiva*’. When we sit with people and share their pain, it shows that the clergy are with them emotionally. Out of that he believes the loved ones feel the presence of God. The other

point that was raised by a chaplain member in the audience was “the clergy do not have to defend God.”

It was also recommended by Jim that it is important to let people know that they can throw their anger at God. He suggested, that if they don’t give it to God, it will come out somewhere else. I raised the question to the audience, “Do you know of people who believe that it is not o.k. to be angry with God?” One chaplain stated that very few families speak of their anger with God. There was the thought that it is a shame that some people feel that they cannot be honest with God, the Holy One. Another chaplain responded that in her Pentecostal denomination it is believed that people are not to question God. He is sovereign and does everything for our best.

Simcha raised the thought, that from a Jewish perspective, Judaism is a question-based religion. Simcha stated that, “Although God is supposed to know what he is doing, Abraham argues with God about Sodom.” God says o.k. If there are ten righteous people, I will not destroy the city. In the Golden Calf incident God wanted to destroy the people but Moses argued with God and He relented. Again he mentioned that it is o.k. to question God about the loss of loved ones, parents, or children.

When asked in Islam is it o.k. to be angry with God Ali countered yes, but that is one of the reasons that Muslims pray to God five times a day, so that they don’t get that angry with God. Praying five times a day, he added, if something is bothering you, you can communicate with God. He then elaborated on when the prayers are said during the course of the day.

Later someone shared the recent grief in her family of losing several members at one time, and how anger was not dealt with in the family. Anger, Ali stated is ‘cathartic’,

and must be released. You never get over the loss, but it doesn't hurt as much he continued, as when you release those fury feelings.

One of the audience members talked about the emotions of shock that comes with grief in the sudden loss of a loved one. She then posed a question to the clergy as she is still coping with the loss of her daughter just a few years ago. She spoke about the priest who was at the mass along with some 400 other people, but she never saw the priest again after the funeral. Do you go and speak to the family after the services she posed.

Do you make phone calls or stop in to see them, again. When the phone calls have stopped, months have gone by, and the fanfare is over, when all the fruit baskets are gone, that's when the people are ready to hear the consoling words, she uttered.

Pastor Jim stated that one month after the death he sends a little note/card out to the family, letting them know that he would love to come and see them, as he makes overtures of pastoral and spiritual care. He also sends pamphlets on the grief and mourning process. Also every year right before the holidays he holds a celebration of life service, for all the families whose loved ones he has buried for that year. They are invited to get ready for the empty sit before big celebrations. He encourages them to send snapshots/photographs of their departed loved ones, which are projected with scriptures on screens in the church.

They get an angel, which is hung in the church during the advent season, and on the last day of Advent they are encouraged to pick up their angel and take it home to put it on their Christmas tree. This is part of Pastor Jim's process in helping people to cope with their grief, in the church.

He further asserted that he takes this action because he has seen all too often how people feel deserted in their grief.

The manager of the pastoral care department stated that the people who should be most available to people in grief should be their clergy. Unfortunately however, many times they don't know what to do because they have not been taught, he added. They have been taught the rituals, which is only the beginning of the mourning process. He stated that this is often the experience for people in many religions. He presented the idea, that congregants should call their clergy to let them know that they need them, and if they respond that they don't know what to do that is fine, at least communication has been initiated.

Simcha responded that from a Jewish perspective there is *shiva*, which means seven where a person goes into mourning for seven days. During this time people visit to make themselves available to the griever. Lending a shoulder to cry on, on an ear to listen to stories of the deceased. In Judaism he continued it is not just about clergy for when someone makes a '*shiva* call' (visit) it's about community; and we are there with you. He makes a point to his congregation that although you may visit for *shiva* that is not where it ends.

You have to be there for the grief stricken family, for months and months. Like priming a pump it gets them into the mode. Simcha mentioned how he often invites the bereaved over to his home for a Shabbat dinner because he does not want the person to be alone. He says that through the meal and talking you kind of get lost for a moment away from the pain.

The audience member who lost a child countered how her life has changed, for her. She sees life in the segments of before her daughter and after her daughter. She stated how she is now living in the new world without her daughter. People state that they are here for you, but the truth is that people stay with you for as best that they can. The human side of it is that people move on with their lives. The pain of grief she continued is so hard and so deep that people don't want to stay there with you, while the mourner is still left stuck in the pain of loss. She argues that what people really need are the clergy. She identified the pain of grief as excruciating.

You learn to change your face. People say that you are smiling again but they don't know that you are crying within. She reiterates that's why I am asking for the clergy. Perhaps there needs to be more education among all clergy.

Simcha brings in a fascinating antidote. He states, as clergy, our lives are a daily roller coaster ride. There are times when I am dealing with someone in a grief situation and an hour later I have to be joyful and happy because I am about to deal with a young couple about to be married. And then I am dealing with someone who has just gone to the hospital with a drug overdose.

Two hours later I am dealing with something else. So our lives as clergy are a mess. (Note: Pastor Jim is smiling and nodding in agreement with Rabbi Simcha's comments.) One of the things that I really loved about this workshop is that aside from our common scriptural goal, we did not target where we were going to go. It is rare for lay people to get this in-depth view into the lives of clergy. In seminary, Simcha's conversation was par for the course, but seldom do others get a clue into the spectrum of duties, and roles of clergy. He elaborated it is an absolute horror show. His grandmother

he said, stated, “A Rabbi is not a job for a good Jewish boy”. The audience roared with laughter. With that he admitted that, as clergy, there are times when we fall short.

One of the things that Jim brought up is that when he buries a child for a congregant he often tries to bring up the name with the parent, if only in passing. He wanted to know if that was appropriate to which the audience member replied, “Sure I always want to hear my daughter’s name.” “The worst thing,” he continued, “is that most people never mention the name again.” It was discussed that people are afraid to bring up the person’s name for fear that the family will cry. The audience member stated that the tears are there already; it’s fine to mention the child or loved one’s name.

Another audience member wanted to talk about a name. She and her grandmother were very close, so that when her grandmother died she went to her Rabbi and officially took her grandmother’s name. So part of her grandmother is always with her. She has her grandmother’s Hebrew name. She says that although it has been many years she still grieves the loss of her.

Ali stated that visitations are about the same as a wake or *shiva* in Islam. He stated that when a Muslim dies the body is washed and wrapped in linen, cotton sheets, and placed in a coffin. Then there are prayers said for the person. Then there is the gathering at the home, with lots of food and sweets. Burial is usually between 24 and 48 hours, he stated. The moderator suggested that is much like Judaism.

Simcha stated that it is traditional in Judaism to have a plain pine box, so that no one can feel that they did not spend enough on a mahogany casket for the deceased. Thus everyone is equal, financially. The plain box is also used by Muslims, but it is up to the

family, Ali added. Ali was asked if there were sacred prayers for the sick. He offered various Islamic scriptures for note.

A doctor in the audience addressed the fact that doctors are now trained on how to handle the bereaved and the palliative care process. She stated that she would not be at Hospice if they did not care about hospice and end of life care.

Ali was asked about the Islamic views of the afterlife, which he stated does exist. He was asked also if they believe in Heaven. He stated in Arabic it is called *Jannah*, which means Paradise, but it is the same thing as Heaven. He stated that we all end up at the same place.

The last question had to do with the Jewish perspective of God writing someone into the Book of Life. That was interesting, as I did not know that the Book of Life was part of the Jewish tradition. Simcha gave a detailed explanation of the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, and Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur, he explained, is the Day of Atonement; it is the court of mercy and is your day to have a one-on-one with the CEO of the universe. There are two heavenly courts, he continued: there is one of justice, and one of appeals (mercy). He talked about the difference between justice, which is very strict, and mercy, and how one can talk to the CEO of the universe to appeal your case. He stated you can't just speak to the President of the United States, but you can speak to the CEO of the universe 24 hours a day.

Finally, Simcha talked about the afterlife in Judaism and the conflicts between the flesh and the spirit, and how the soul must reach its level of maturity and perfection, before it then goes into heaven.

Pastor Jim Barnum closed the seminar with a blessing.

Seminar notes and thoughts:

When Ali was introduced, he wanted the audience to be clear that he is not clergy. His warmth, humility, and charm really set the atmosphere for the seminar. In fact, the Rabbi, in his introduction, piggybacked on Ali's introduction by stating that he didn't want to be considered a Rabbi, but just a regular person. The panelists all came to my spirit through prayer and mediation. I am honored and delighted to have such gentlemen of pristine character to take part in this project. They each shared from their hearts and personal experiences that really grabbed our listeners. People still talk about the workshop as one of the best ever given at the hospice agency.

The success of the workshop was not predicated on theologians from various faith beliefs espousing doctrines from their particular life dynamics but rather men from varied beliefs who had encounters in life dealing with grief that were real, tangible, solid to the core of their very being, and which the audience embraced as fundamental to the core of their individuality.

Any workshop that wants to reach out to its audience must first require that its participants/panelists reach into their own pains, disappointments, and realities, as it relates to the given topic or venue. As they say, "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted."

According to John Calvin, "It is easy to understand that we must give careful attention both to the reading and hearing of Scripture if we want to get any benefit from the Spirit of God." At first reading I had difficulty comprehending the full measure of this statement.

However, as I think about the Spirit, and the times in my life when it has engulfed me, it is only through the reading and studying of scripture that the relevance of such experiences really began to take grasp for me. Again, I would like to thank my panelists who went beyond the scripture in the seminar and into their own experiences and learning from life.

Out of this I learned that when you come from a place of sincerity with an open heart before a group, people will become imbued by the experience, and will in turn share their thoughts and opinions because of the peace and tranquility that such emotions bring forth.

Seminar Highlight Bullets

Some of the area's addressed in the workshop are as follows:

- Pastoral / Spiritual care counselors have to be down to earth.
- Clergy have to avail themselves to a lot of different people
- Relationship of the deceased, and type of death will determine the depth of the grief.
- Religiously there is no formula for dealing with death and grief
- Clichés are empty for those who mourn, e.g. "He or she is in a better place."
- There are 13 inches between the head and the heart, and a world of difference between the two.
- Some people experience anger not just with God but also with their church/ denomination, in the death of a loved one.
- Family dysfunction can play a major role in the grief process.
- We are Wounded Healers.
- Anger can be a part of grief.
- Guilt can be a hidden part of grief as well.

- Sensitivity training should be afforded religious and lay leaders.
- Where is God in the midst of the pain? A common question.
- There is a loss of hopes and dreams in the death of a loved one.
- “Call me if you need anything,” puts the burden back on the griever. Just do what you can. Many times they are so grieved and numbed that they can’t really think of what they need.
- Importance of bereavement, and grief counseling.
- The truth of Grief. Never say, “I know how you feel!”
- Issues of the afterlife, seeing loved ones again, Resurrection, and Reincarnation are important to many people.
- Issues of Paradise/Heaven and Hell concern many people.
- You don’t need faith to grieve, just a heart.
- Relationship and dialogue with God can be helpful in the grief process.
- It’s o.k. to be mad with God.
- You can give people permission to be angry with God.
- You don’t have to defend God.
- You can argue with God! Sodom and Gomorrah and the Golden calf incident in the bible are examples.
- Anniversaries of death are significant for the bereaved.
- People want contact with their clergy beyond the funeral.
- Loneliness is a significant matter for the bereaved.
- The funeral service is just the beginning of the long road ahead in healing.
- Life before and after the death of a loved one is how some people view life after the loss.
- Some people who try to help can’t stay in the grief of another, while the mourners often need to stay in their grief as their wounds of a broken heart begin to heal.

- Clergy often fall short in their humanity, for life is like a roller coaster. One minute there is a funeral discussion, and in the next hour there could be the joy of wedding planning, in addition to his/hers own pain and sorrows.
- Rituals: Muslim body washed and wrapped in white linen; much like Judaism.
- Some religious traditions vary by nationality and culture.
- Qur'an readings: Surahs on grief: Surah 3:145, 2:130-134
- The book of life also exists in Judaism.

CHAPTER 11: SPIRITUAL CARE GUIDE FOR CLERGY AND LAY LEADERS OF THE BEREAVED

“Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor” (Psalms 39:5 KJV). Undoubtedly one could presuppose therefore that if in our best state we are but vapor, then perhaps in our worst state we are but tears; particularly as it relates to the death, grief and mourning of loved ones, and significant others. This Pastoral Care Guide is developed to help clergy and lay leaders assist those who mourn, across the multifaith spectrum.

This chapter was conceived as a result of my demonstration project entitled, “Can We Mourn Together, Those Not Born Together” seminar, held on December 4, 2009, at the Hospice Care Networks Woodbury, N.Y. office. Many of the audience members discussed and disclosed their dissatisfaction with the role of clergy as it relates to grief and mourning. As such this demonstration project includes resources, and references that may help clergy and lay leaders to function in pastoral/spiritual care roles that are vital for their religious communities.

For many denominations that are seeking to ordain new members into the role of clergy, Clinical Pastoral Education is mandated. Included are websites for the Association of Professional Chaplains and other sources such as the HealthCare Chaplaincy organization.

The Spiritual Guide to Pastoral Care

Introduction

The purpose of this Spiritual Care Guide is to enrich the caregiver in further developing and enhancing the gifts of caring that are primarily already present within. One of the advantages of giving pastoral or spiritual care to a member of one's own congregation or faith group is that for the most part beliefs and doctrine are shared and thus similar in scope and nature; although many times people are raised up in one faith, and upon adulthood switch to something that is more befitting their personality or better meet his/her spiritual needs.

On the other hand as a chaplain/spiritual care guide you never know the background of those you may encounter. As such it is important to assess a family's or individual's faith history. This knowledge is essential as often during the onset of a spiritual crises, such as the death of a loved one, people tend to revert back to the spirituality which is rooted deep down in their souls or spirits.

Many times, when a death is foreseen, the ritual care of the dying person's circle of friends and /or family can start early before the shock of death. One of the ways to use ritual as the focus for beginning the grieving process is to plan the funeral ahead of time.

From experience I have found that those who have planned or articulated their wishes before their death have given loved ones much ease in the planning of a memorial/funeral service.

Some families find peace and moments of comfort as they plan the funeral or memorial service together, recounting times long forgotten. I know this may not work for all families but many of the families that I have worked with have found it a time of reflection and joy as they describe stories that will be passed on from generation to

generation. This planning before the time of death can be a time for family members and friends to say some of the things to the dying person that otherwise might not be said until the wake, *shiva*, or funeral, e.g., what they value most about him or her; what their favorite memories are; why they would want to sing a certain song. The planning process can also help create a sense of ownership of the funeral rite itself, which will likely make it more meaningful to all concerned.⁶⁷

This project dealt only with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There are too many world religions and too many expressions of grief and bereavement to deal with comprehensively and effectively in this project. When offering spiritual support to one of a differing faith ideology, offering readings from the other person's faith prospective is plausible if the language is the same for the people concerned. Readings from the Old Testament are appropriate for both Jews, and Christians. The New Testament however would be appropriate only for Christians.

Some editions of the Qur'an are in Arabic and English, and reading this book may be helpful for Muslims. Note, however, that washing one's hands is required before touching the Qur'an. Part of being an effective caregiver to the bereaved is being sensitive to the nuances of one's faith and accompanying traditions, thoughts, and practices. Because of the intricacies in dealing with multifaiths this care guide will present some of the most basic forms of spiritual care for clergy, lay leaders, and others.

For example, a critical issue in grief and bereavement is the extent to which the culture supports the bereaved. When we looked at Judaism we saw how they have the practice of sitting *shiva*. In some cultures there may be initial support, but later support

⁶⁷ Elaine Ramshaw and Don S. Browning, eds., *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 70.

including socioeconomic may be withdrawn. In many cultures widowhood can be an economic disaster. In most Arab (Muslim) cultures, women inherit less than men and in some culture women have no inheritance.⁶⁸

As a former Deacon, Minister, now Elder (ordained clergy) in my church, and Board Certified Chaplain, I can appreciate deeply all that I have learned in going out to serve communion to the sick and shut-ins during my earlier role as a deacon. I now serve as a Chaplain with the Hospice Care Network, and have completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education, with the HealthCare Chaplaincy. This learning along with my seminary studies have really peaked my interest in developing a lesson plan for Pastoral/Spiritual Care and Bereavement counseling.

I remember one visit in particular with the Deacons wherein we were visiting the former head of the Deacon board who had Alzheimer's. His wife was very distraught as she spoke about her numerous encounters and difficulties in dealing with her husband who had frequently left the house unbeknownst to her only to be found by the police, or caring neighbors. While she was crying and really venting her emotions, a Deacon began telling her things like, "Jesus is able," or "Stop crying; everything will be alright"; thus shutting her down in the midst of her emotions.

I suspect that the greatest challenge for some in the presence of a person cry uncontrollably, is to figure out how to get him/her to stop. Tears mean different things to different people. She had explained that she was unable to communicate such emotions within her own family, so we were actually a welcome relief for her to let her guard down, and her emotions out. Unfortunately, we fell short in our spiritual care by not

⁶⁸ C.E. Kemp and L.A. Rasbridge, *Refugee and Immigrant Health* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

allowing her to say how she felt. Out of this experience I conceived the idea of having some sort of training for those who visit the sick and shut-in, members of the church, and various other faith communities.

One of the last keys to helping others with their grief is for the caregiver to understand his/her own limitations. It is hard to help others cope with issues that we ourselves have yet to address or overcome. So in addition to the Website guide, one should be familiar with resources in their very own community, region and or vicinity where trained professionals may intervene, and assist, e.g. psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and trained bereavement counselors. These professionals may better provide congregants with the tools needed to better manage their effectual return to a new level of normalcy. When a tree loses a limb, it may continue to grow, or it may begin to whither and die.

Spiritual Care Resource Guide and References:

Websites:

- <http://www.professionalchaplains.org>
- <http://www.healthcarechaplaincy.org>
- <http://acpe.edu>
- <http://www.stephenministries.org/griefresources>
- http://endoflife.northwestern.edu/religion_spirituality/pain.cfm
- <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

Books:

- *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*” by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler
(Five stages of Grief – Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance)
- *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 4th Edition, by J. William Worden
- *Grief, Dying and Death*, by Therese A. Rando
- *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, eds, Stuart M. Matlins & Arthur J. Magida

Examples of Bereavement Issues to be addressed with Mourners by Spiritual caregivers.

- Grief Education
- Sadness/loneliness
- Regrets
- Resentment
- Anger
- Forgiveness
- Coming to a place of Peace, Acceptance
- Role Changes
- Closure

Children’s Bereavement

Children’s Understanding of Death⁶⁹

⁶⁹ "Bereavement Resource Guide," North Shore LIJ North Shore University Hospital.

Birth – Three Years

Infants may have a sense that something is missing if someone had been consistent in their life. Children view death as a loss, separation or abandonment. Infants and toddlers sense when there is sadness or anxiety around them.

Ages 4- 6

Children view death as reversible and temporary and believe that people who die could come back. Children at this age also believe that their thoughts or feelings may have caused the death or that death is punishment for doing something bad.

Ages 7 – 9

A child may begin to view death as final. Children may see death as something that is contagious. Children may also have increased curiosity about illness, death and how it affects the body.

Ages 10 – 12

Children begin to understand death in a more logical way and are concerned with how the loss will impact them. They may ask questions about an afterlife.

Adolescents

Adolescents have an adult understanding of death as inevitable, universal and irreversible. They may begin to question religious beliefs. Adolescents may be reluctant to speak about the death.

Helping Children Deal with Death

- Listen:
 - Listen to what the child is asking before providing explanations.
- Be Honest:
 - Children understand death based on their development level.

- Provide simple, accurate information in a way the child can understand.
- Be sure to use the word “death” and not “sleeping.”
- Encourage:
 - Encourage the child to ask questions. Let the child know it is okay to express their feelings and share memories of their loved ones.
 - Give the child outlets for feeling through art, music and play.
- Support:
 - Observe changes in behavior.
 - Keep routines as normal as possible.
 - Help the child to understand that they did not cause the death.
 - Reassure the child that they will still be cared for.
 - Communicate with school, close friends and family and consider other alternative support programs.

Training tools for Spiritual/Pastoral care providers:

Phase I - Keirsey Temperament Sorter II

We all have at least one gift and or ability. Before we begin I would like to give out the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II. The first step toward seeing others as distinct from yourself is to become better acquainted with your own traits and character. The best way to determine your own traits of character is to watch what you actually do from time to time and place-to-place and in different company⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ David Keirsey, *Please Understand Me II* (Del Mar, California: Prometheus Nemesis Book Co., 1998).

Phase II - Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Deficiency needs

- Physiological needs
- Safety needs
- Love/Belonging needs
- Status (Esteem needs)

Being needs

- Self-actualization
- Self-transcendence

Phase III - Identification of Possible Needs / Issues

- Appreciation
- Worry
- Concern
- Grief
- Sorrow
- Despondence
- Depression
- Health Needs (Mental or Physical)
- Spiritual Needs
- Financial Needs

Phase IV – Issues to be reported immediately to the Pastor/Rabbi/Imam/ Religious leader and or the Police and appropriate Social Services Agency.

- Child Abuse
- Elder Abuse

- Physical / Mental Abuse

Phase V – Referrals

- Welfare Department
- Social Work
- Psychiatrist
- Medical Care
- Bereavement Care
- Police
- Hospice

Phase VI – Secular Care Giving versus Pastoral /Spiritual Care Counseling

Phase VII- Ethic's and Ethical Behavior

Phase VIII – Interpersonal Communication

(Empathetic Listening and Appropriate Responses, which includes Role Playing)

Phase IX – The Sacred Religious Principles for Spiritual Care Giving

Phase X –The Use of Prayers and Scriptures for Healing (As appropriate for the particular faith community)

CHAPTER 12: MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

January 6, 2010

Professional Competencies Identified for Multifaith Ministry

Candidate: George Teachey

Responder: Michael Kersten, Chaplain, Hospice Care Network

1. **Knowledge and appreciation of one's own faith tradition:** In tact, and appropriate.
2. **Knowledge and appreciation of the values of other faith traditions:** George did a great job with his workshop.
3. **Ability to engage productively in dialogue:** Again the workshop brought his abilities to distinction, as he did a great job, as he is very engaging. I also have enjoyed our discussions during chaplaincy retreat days.
4. **Ability to interpret sacred texts:** n/a
5. **Ability as worship leader:** George has led staff devotions with a sense of awe and humility.
6. **Ability to be transformative:** That goes with his other qualities, and is indicative of his position as a hospice chaplain.

7. **Ability as multifaith leader:** We all do this by the nature of our vocation.
George serves with a spiritual agenda and not a religious agenda.
8. **Ability to serve as a multifaith religious educator:** noted above
9. **Ability as counselor in a multifaith context:** n/a
10. **Pastor:** I saw the preacher in George through his phrases, speech, and the way he engages in dialogue with others.
11. **Spiritual leader:** George has a strong focus on the spiritual dynamics of others, and appears to operate as led by the spirit.
12. **Ecumenist:** See notes regarding the seminar
13. **Witness or Evangelist:** n/a
14. **Administrator:** George is quite computer literate and professional as when I shadowed him as a new chaplain, I learned the most from him.
15. **Professional:** George is very professional, respectful in speech, dresses appropriately, is attentive and participates in discussions candidly.

February 12, 2010

Professional Competencies Identified for Multifaith Ministry

Candidate: George Teachey

Responder: Gerald Calhoun, D.Min, Manager of Pastoral Care, Hospice Care Network

1. **Knowledge and appreciation of one's own faith tradition:** George seems very clear of his Baptist faith tradition; he nourishes it frequently and regularly through his church involvement, including his preaching.
2. **Knowledge and appreciation of the values of other faith traditions:** His hospice ministry deepens this appreciation since he ministers to people from many and varied backgrounds. He shows great respect for traditions, which are different from his own. In all of them, he is able to identify common spiritual questions and issues which the patients and families address according to their own beliefs, rituals, understanding, etc.
3. **Ability to engage productively in dialogue:** George has great curiosity, which springs from his desire to keep learning and growing; so his dialogue with people of other faith traditions (or with no faith tradition) is sincere and reflective.
4. **Ability to interpret sacred texts:** I have little knowledge of George in this area. What I do know is that his use of scripture in his hospice ministry is appropriate and appreciated by patients and families.
5. **Ability as worship leader:** Again my first-hand knowledge of George in this area is limited to his leading devotions at various hospice meetings. Coworkers like his style of pastoral leading, particularly because he asks for their input.

6. **Ability to be transformative:** George calls out the best in people, often encouraging them to trust their own experience and their own lives as the handiwork of the Spirit. At hospice George has helped many people to *feel* God's love through his own love for them. Ability as a multifaith leader: George has prayed with and for patients and families of various religious backgrounds and he has conducted funerals for patients of all traditions.
7. **Ability to serve as a multifaith religious educator:** George organized a very successful seminar on grieving from three faith traditions: he brought together religious leaders who provided important insights for hospice staff and volunteers.
8. **Ability as counselor in a multifaith context:** Once again he is a very successful hospice chaplain for people of all different traditions, some of which are religious and some of which are not.
9. **Pastor:** In the most important aspect of being a pastor, really caring for and about his flock, George meets this standard in his hospice ministry. An example of this George follows through on families after their loved one has died and is no longer on the hospice program. Spiritual Leader: George's license plate on his car reads: "1 in spirit." His work in hospice attests to his desire and ability to lead people closer to the Lord through deepening their awareness of the Spirit in their lives and in the world.
10. **Ecumenist:** By example George encourages interfaith dialogue; he eagerly engages chaplains of other traditions in discussions and he is ready to learn new approaches and understandings from them. Personally, George invited me on a

particular occasion to attend noonday prayers at a local Islamic Center: a Baptist and a Catholic praying with Moslems.

11. **Witness or Evangelist:** George can talk very movingly of his own faith experience which inspires others to trust the Lord in their own lives.
12. **Administrator:** George puts people first; he is organized; he can prioritize and he has the perseverance to see a task through to the end. I have no doubt that George can delegate responsibilities since he shows regard for other peoples' talents.
13. **Professional:** George is a professional – through and through by his careful respect confidentiality, his personal demeanor, his language, his healthy respect for appropriate boundaries, by the seriousness with which he approaches his work/ministry.

February 18, 2010

Professional Competencies Identified for Multifaith Ministry

Candidate: George Teachey

Responder: Susan C. Sturgess, MS, RD, Senior Dietitian, Hospice Care Network

Knowledge and appreciation of one's own faith tradition: George often speaks of his faith and the comfort he receives by putting things in the hand of God.

Knowledge and appreciation of the values of other faith traditions: George researches principles of other faiths and incorporates their teachings into his work.

Ability to engage productively in dialogue: George provides us with a topic for devotion and encourages us to expand on our contributions and relate our feelings to those expressed by others.

Ability to interpret sacred texts: not applicable.

Ability as worship leader: George is organized in presentation, incorporates the participation of others into his devotions and provides direction for prayer.

Ability to be transformative: George makes a difference in the lives of our patients and staff by helping them come to conclusions that provide them spiritual comfort.

Ability as multifaith leader: utilizes resources from other religions effectively.

Ability to serve as a multifaith religious educator: utilizes resources effectively.

Ability as counselor in a multifaith context: utilizes resources effectively.

Pastor: not applicable.

Spiritual leader: inspires and encourages self-discovery.

Ecumenist: encourages interfaith dialogue.

Witness or Evangelist: not applicable

Administrator: not applicable

Professional: George is professional in his appearance, his demeanor, and the substance and quality of his work.

CHAPTER 13: EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

Recently, I ran into a colleague at school (NYTS) who asked if I studied under the ‘Pastoral Care’ track in the doctorate of ministry program. I said, “no,” and began to ponder why not. As I took a spiritual inventory of myself, I thought about how all my life I have counseled people and helped them connect dots to lines that they did not know existed in their lives. Because that level of communication was birthed in me and manifested as one of my gifts, I had no desire to pursue that, which was already instilled within me. Rather, I chose the ‘Multifaith’ path in the context of the doctorate because that is actually what I was called to as a chaplain. My anointing by God was not just for a congregation, but also for the many others whose spirituality may be unaligned, or mystified, who seek to find their place in the world, and their understanding of the divine through spiritual direction.

If this doctorate degree were nestled primarily under pastoral care, I never would have entered this program. The world is comprised of multifaith communities, and the people I serve daily as a hospice chaplain, are part of that sphere of influence. Thus the Multifaith Doctor of Ministry fits my calling, spirit, purpose, and mission for the Lord.

Chaplains in my current workplace may not be welcomed in the Bereavement department, but that could change in time. Theo Brooks in his book, *Accountability*, observes that, “Versatile managers may command admiration, but not all managers are necessarily expected to know the ins and outs of every single job they manage.” He later

asserts that, "Managers have to learn to ask questions that will give them insight into what is going on in the minds of specialist."⁷¹ Specialist in this context could be a chaplain/chaplains in the Hospice Care Network whose talents and experiences could potentially be used to impact those who grieve to find peace with God, themselves and their faith: a spiritual issue, which I do not believe, is being addressed, at this time.

In his article entitled: "Human Capital and High Performance in Public Organizations," David G. Carnevale describes the process by which management expropriates knowledge.

Employee know-how has always been valued in work organizations. However, with respect to the sociology of knowledge, traditional management expropriated staff intelligence, broke it down into parts, and returned it to workers in the form of highly specialized and constrained work roles.⁷²

In the case of my organization the role of chaplains in bereavement is beyond constrained; it is nullified.

Organizations are complex social systems with well-defined, established procedures, processes, and patterns of interpersonal relationships. I am in no way attempting to knock my workplace, but I understand the dynamics of organizational systems and their resistance to subtle changes/transformation.

As the saying goes, "It is, what it is!" Organizations have established formal structures that are supplemented by equally established informal structures, and both structures allocate power, status, prestige, and satisfaction to members. In large part, organizations resist change because people resist change, and people frequently resist

⁷¹ Theo Brooks, *Accountability* (Clifton, New Jersey: Akkad Press, 1995), 121.

⁷² Steven W. Hays, Richard C. Kearney, *Public Personnel Administration* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 134.

change because it is perceived as threatening to some valued interpersonal relationships or change in the status, power, or compensation of individuals in the organization.⁷³

This is not an unknown paradigm in public administration. Change in any institution or group is often unwanted, challenged, and or resisted. I once read that one of the signs of a dying church is when its members proclaim that we have never done it this way before. For some people the thought of a fresh or new perspective for organization change is tantamount to one's demise. Biblically it is stated that without a vision the people perish; but for some, a new vision presents a loss of old values, and a threat to previous goals and principles.

The culture, climate, and age of an organization also determine its willingness and ability to change. The culture of an organization comprises the shared beliefs, attitudes, and values of members that determine organizational norms of behavior. The more widely and firmly held a set of values, the more difficult they will be to change. A change that conflicts with basic values about what the organization does or how it should do it will meet strong resistance.⁷⁴

Although organizational change is possible, it is difficult and demanding. More often than not, change will be resisted and unless special efforts are made to alleviate fears and reduce resistance, change will not occur.⁷⁵ As stated earlier, the thought of asking the CEO of my organization about my participation in the bereavement group

⁷³ Florence Heffron, *Organization Theory & Public Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 153-154.

⁷⁴ Debra Stewart and G. David Garson, *Organizational Behavior and Management* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1983), 179.

⁷⁵ Heffron, *Organizational Theory*, 156.

process was a non-issue. While in chaplain residency, I remember my teacher/mentor often reminding us to think of the following question, “Is this the hill I want to die on?”

“Can we mourn together those not born together,” was inspired by the notion that regardless of one’s religious thoughts, doctrines, beliefs, or spirituality, there is an underlining branch that moves beyond the sacred, yet evolves into that which is humane. The issue of training for chaplains, lay leaders, and clergy on the issues of grief and mourning, became quite paramount, as I reviewed the video of the ‘Can We Mourn Together’ workshop. This finding was quite a surprise. I hope to introduce the Pastoral/Spiritual bereavement care guide to my Bishop for possible inclusion in a minister’s conference to be held later this summer 2010.

The pain and sting of death along with the inability to cope appropriately with the loss of a loved one hits harshly and often leaves family and friends feeling helplessly in awe. In summation, I believe that it is quite clear that we can mourn together those not born together. Often times it is not about faith, or religion, but rather it is about the heart. I remember one day I had the opportunity to meet with a (Catholic) family which consisted of three daughters who sat around their mom, as she lay near death. Two daughters sat on each side of the mother’s bed each holding a hand while the third daughter sat near her head; there was such a bond amongst them.

Ironically one of the daughters stated with tears in her eyes, “I know that my mom is going to Heaven, I just want to know that she arrives there safely.” That was such a powerful moment, that I don’t think I will ever forget. As fate / the spirit would have it one of my peers a social worker (Jewish) was with me in the hospital room. She was grieving the anniversary of her mom’s death, and tearfully commented to the

women, “ I can tell you one thing for sure; you will know!” She further told the story of how after the death of her mom, an old friend of her mom mysteriously showed up in her life and gave her quite a bit of comfort, by saying the right words, and having a calming presence. She stated that it seems that whenever she thinks of her mom, this woman shows up, and she had seen the woman that morning. It was as if an angel had appeared in the room and lifted the family’s burden.

Although the daughter’s mom had not yet died, she was in a vegetative, unresponsive state, and her children had begun the grieving process. The social worker helped engage that process through the telling of her story. Her response to the family was not a good chaplain’s practice, but it may have offered the comfort the sisters needed at that time. This story had nothing to do with faith, but everything to do with the human spirit, with the almost universal pain and suffering of losing a mother.

Whether it is true or false is not nearly as crucial as whether it helps us make sense of loss, adjust to pain, and move to a place where happiness and sorrow are able to co-exist for the ultimate goal of helping families to successfully resolve death, dying, bereavement, and related end-of-life issues, as well as facilitating their processes of searching for meaning, is attainment of the ability to reclaim joy as a valid part of life.⁷⁶

Indeed, what is important is that our belief system works for us, whatever that may be. Lately I have discovered that many people have the answers to the questions embroiled in their grief. But because of the dire and dreaded pains in their hearts and minds, they cannot make sense of their emotions. Some times just to listen to people in their grief as Pastor Jim Barnum pointed out is the best thing, and only thing you can do.

⁷⁶ Becvar, *Grief*, 242.

Listening allows some people to hear the silent voices that have been muffled in their hearts.

Anything that brings people into contact with God nurtures the growth of their spirits and heals their souls.⁷⁷ On January 14, 2005, there was a full-page advertisement printed in *The New York Times*, signed by many Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Leaders. It was titled: *The Tent of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah: A Call for Peacemaking*. In part they stated

We are members of the families of Abraham ‘Muslims, Christians, Jews’. Our traditions teach us to have compassion, seek justice, and pursue peace for all peoples. We bear especially deep concern for the region where Abraham grew and learned, taught and flourished. Today that region stretches from Iraq, where Abraham grew up, to Israel and Palestine, where he sojourned, and to Mecca and Egypt, where he visited. Today our hearts are broken by the violence poured out upon the peoples of that broad region.⁷⁸

Although this article from a multifaith dynamic is looking at violence, the basis of truth nestled within is that violence and terrorism garner grief, pain, and bereavement issues.

The religious leaders hermeneutically suggest via biblical doctrine and genealogy that we are all from the same seed of Abraham. Beyond terrorism, illness, natural disasters, diseases, and famine, epidemics plague this universe, which challenges our belief systems everyday and infringes on our will to survive. It is only by faith, that many people find the strength to endure the heartache and grief of the death of a loved one. As pointed out earlier in this project we are all wired for healing; and ones faith

⁷⁷ David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 18.

⁷⁸ As reported in Joan Chittister, et al., *The Tent of Abraham: stories of hope and peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (New York: Beacon Press, 2006), 198.

belief may help that process. A person may never get over their sorrow, but as a caregiver if you keep in mind the differences of the head and the heart, with an open mind to the beliefs, religion, and faith of another, you may find that we truly can mourn together those not born together.

There is a saying that, “It is better to be prepared and not called, then to be called and not prepared”. Because of the wonderful indoctrination and training that I have been exposed to by the doctoral curriculum of NYTS and the embracing of my colleagues, friends, family, and peers, I am thankful to have completed this body of work. It has been painful, slow, and hard, but well worth the effort. I pray that it will be a blessing to those who seek to care for others who must bare the weight of their grief. We serve a mighty God who is able to exceedingly bless beyond anything we can think of, or ask for. I am humbled to serve in the capacity of a chaplain who is non-denominational, yet aware of the awesomeness of God.

APPENDIX

Appendix notes:

October 2008

Life in the context of Multifaith ministry is challenging, yet intriguing at the same time. For example, I have a dear colleague who is a Rabbi. He is an advisor to me on this project. We were trying to coordinate our schedules for a meeting. Ironically he could meet after Rosh Hashanah, which was Thursday, October 2, 2008, which was a bad date for me. And the following Thursday, was Yom Kippur which was bad for him. So the balancing of dates must be carefully harmonized. Additionally there is another person who I am working with for the Islamic aspects of the project, and he was in the midst of Ramadan. So just attempting to arrange meetings is difficult at best, but the rewards of their impartations of wisdom and knowledge make the task most rewarding at best, and well worth the wait overall.

In a July 2009 Team Tips brief by the Hospice Care Network they define the difference between Grief versus Depression:

Preparatory (aka anticipatory) grief is the grief before a loss associated with diagnosis, acute, chronic, and terminal illness experienced by patient, family and caregivers. Examples are actual or fear of a potential health, loss of independence, loss of a body part loss of financial stability, loss of choice and / or mental function.

Features include rumination (reflection) about the past, withdrawal from family/friends and periods of sadness, crying or anxiety. Preparatory Grief is a normal, not pathological, life cycle event.

Depression is a broad spectrum of responses that range from sadness to major clinical depression. Depression and anxiety are present in chronic illness. Depression can be a state of sad mood, a combination of physical and psychological symptoms that may affect functional level, or outlook. Clinically significant depression among a population of dying patients may be somewhat more common (25-77 %) than in the general population. But depression is not an inevitable part of the dying experience and is very treatable.

Lastly they distinguish the differences between Grief and Depression:

Grief	Depression
Identifiable loss	Loss may or may not be identifiable
Focus is on the loss	Focus is on the self
Fluctuating ability to feel pleasure	Inability to feel pleasure
Variable physical symptoms	Persistent self-destructive response
Closeness of others is usually reassuring	Persistent isolation from others/self
Fluctuating emotions “roller-coaster”	Fixed Emotions “Feeling Stuck”

September 11, 2009

Today, September 11, 2009 I am scheduled to meet with J.A. the Bereavement manager for the Hospice Care Network. The death of Mrs. I August 12, 2009, and the subsequent death of her grandson C August 31st 2009, has really stirred me to move forward in this project. It is hard to believe that her 19-year-old grandson died 19 days after her. How ironic that the next paragraph in the book *Grief Counseling* by Worden, reflects the death of a child. God always has a way of showing that there are times, when we are right where we are supposed to be.

J the bereavement manager drew a great distinction between grief and issues of the head and the heart, and how many religious leaders discuss aspects of the head, which may make logical sense, but do little to support the sorrow of the heart. Great meeting and I look forward to follow up discussions.

September 2009

How can clergy be effectively prepared to help those in grief and mourning is something I am pondering.

In a message dated 9/23/2009 8:02:29 AM Eastern Daylight Time, S writes: George, I feel one of the pressing issues is how to respect another's religion without being offensive, knowing something about the other's ritual beliefs, customs, etc.

October 22, 2009

Today, October 22, 2009, I met with Rabbi Simcha Zamir, at his temple Beth Sholom, in Westbury. We discussed the upcoming workshop to be held on Friday, December 4, 2009, "Can We Mourn Together Those Not Born Together." We talked about Judaism, and the role it plays in the life of its followers as it relates to grief, bereavement, and the afterlife. In back of my mind I kept hearing the voice of Joanne

Archer the manager of the bereavement at the Hospice Care Network, talking about the difference between matters of the heart versus the head. As the Rabbi talked about how he has worked with numbers of his parishioners who have suffered the loss of loved ones, I had to keep in mind that I was not sure of the training offered to Rabbis in this area. A thought for a future question as it relates to the Rabbi, Ali, Pastor, and the Priest. What training if any have you had as it relates to grief and bereavement?

One of the things that came up that was quite interesting with Simcha was the notion of what happened to Adam, when Cain murdered Abel. Where was Adam when his son's had a disagreement? Could it be that Adam was so grieved over being expelled from the Garden of Eden that he was in a great depression, and lost touch with the outside world as it may have related to his inner turmoil. Simcha suggested that perhaps Cain did not know he had murdered Abel, as this was the first act. Perhaps he really did not know the magnitude of his actions. It was pointed out by the Rabbi, that Cain found reconciliation and peace as he built cities, which shows that despite his past, he believed in a future.

Another interesting component of Simcha's theology is that God is a giver, and as such created humankind so that He could give to his creation. God was before, is now, and will be forever more. He does not need us in the grand scheme of things; yet we were each created with purpose. The great giver Himself God molded and formed us so that we could give as well. Simcha talked about the soul, and the ideology that in Judaism there is no real concept of Hell. As such does the devil/satan exist today? A thought to give to Simcha. Does Satan exist today, and if so; does he in any way attempt to impede on God's creation?

October 23, 2009

On October 23, 2009, at the Visiting Nurse Service of New York Hospice Care Unit they are hosting their 3rd Annual conference entitled, “From Pulpit to Bedside Seminar.” The conference they state is designed for clergy, religious professionals and lay pastoral caregivers with a focus on new insights, attitudes and skills to bring to the ministry of the bedside of the dying.

However, what is most poignant is the fact that according to their research many religious leaders often find they lack comfort in providing pastoral care to those at the end of life. They emphasize in their seminar details that many surveys indicate that dying persons want their religious leaders to provide spiritual support, but clergy and lay pastoral caregivers report that they are unsure what to say in conversations with the dying and the bereaved.

October 29, 2009

On October 29, 2009, I met with B.M. at the Queens office of HCN as we went over our role for the Pastoral care workshop on Spiritual Healing and Bereavement. Some of the things she lifted up were the following notions:

- You can't heal what you don't feel.
- The only unhealthy emotion is an unexpressed emotion.
- Grief is a process.
- The way we grieve is based on the way we have been taught.

November 10, 2009

Held a discussion with team site members Michael, and Susan regarding not wanting to bring on a Priest for the panel discussion. This is an educational project. I am

not trying to affirm anyone's faith. G.M.'s (unnamed source) comments and or questions really solidified this for me; as she expressed great issues regarding the lack of females as priest and layperson being faded out and deacons and priest being assigned their duties. Fruitful topics on Catholicism but not as it relates to this D.Min demonstration project.

November 11, 2009

On Wednesday, November 11, 2009, during a Red team meeting farewell to a nurse (Male R) he stated that he often feels people feel better when he says to a loved one of a deceased after a pronouncement, that I believe the person is in a better place now. Ironically, Joanne Archer was present and looked at me over her glasses. The issue of head versus heart was a topic we had just discussed yet the nurse did not understand the ramifications of that thought for loved ones.

Furthermore, for some people such as some Jewish people there may not be a belief in the after life. So the thought of being in a better place has not meaning whatsoever. As a chaplain I wanted to discuss this his response, but the moment was not appropriate. I will follow up with him again. I realize that some people may not be open to such a dialogue but I believe he would be. In fact perhaps this is one of the issues that can be addressed in our upcoming forum on December 4th.

November 12, 2009

E-mail from Rabbi Sheer from the HealthCare chaplaincy regarding a good book on Jewish mourning and grief.

November 16, 2009

The below biblical story highlights one who is grieving but does not want to be consoled. Great possible narrative to be pondered by the panelists at the seminar. Sent to the site team members for their thoughts and evaluations.

Introduction: Joseph's brothers put him in a pit, and plot to tell his father that he has been killed by a goat (Genesis 37:31-35NKJV).

So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?"

And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Copy of E-mail sent to site team members

Greetings,

The attached story from the bible I thought would be interesting for the panelist to discuss from their religious prospectives; as it relates to dealing with someone in their grief. What do you think?

Introduction: Joseph's brothers are jealous of him, and thus put him in a pit in order to get rid of him.

Can't wait to hear your thoughts.

Blessings and Peace,
George

November 20, 2009, HCN communicator (E-mail sent to all Hospice Care Network employee's) sent at 7:40a.m. Regarding the upcoming demonstration project (Workshop)

Greetings All,

On Friday, December 4, 2009, at 10a.m. in the Woodbury office, the Pastoral Care Department is sponsoring a Workshop, "Can We Mourn together those Not Born Together".

Its goal is to explore the issues of Grief and Mourning from the prospective of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. We will have a panel discussion with each faith represented, as well as questions and answers entwined.

Hope to see you there, as we explore how the issue of faith may bring light to someone in the shadows of heartache.

E-mail sent to the panelists - November 2009

To Jim Barnum, Ali Al-Rahman, Simcha Zamir
From George A. Teachey
Subject Seminar - Can We Mourn together those Not Born Together?

Gentlemen, I thank you for your participation in this workshop with profound gratitude, humbleness, and eager anticipation. This seminar will be the highlight of my Doctoral works in Multifaith religions. I am thankful to the Hospice Care Network, and especially, my Manager Jerry Calhoun who have supported me in this mission, without whom none of this would be possible.

The attached story from the bible I thought would be interesting for discussion from our varied religious prospectives; as it relates to dealing with someone in their grief.

Introduction: Joseph's brothers are jealous of him, and thus put him in a pit in order to get rid of him.

Genesis 37:31(NKJV) The Holy Bible, New King James Version

³¹So they took Joseph's tunic (coat), killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

Genesis 37:32(NKJV)

³²Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son's tunic or not?"

Genesis 37:33(NKJV)

³³And he recognized it and said, "*It is* my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

Genesis 37:34(NKJV)

³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

Genesis 37:35(NKJV)

³⁵And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Attached: This is a communication sent to the staff at the Hospice Care network:

Greetings All,

On Friday, December 4, 2009, at 10a.m. in the Woodbury office, the Pastoral Care Department is sponsoring a Workshop, "Can We Mourn together those Not Born Together".

Its goal is to explore the issues of Grief and Mourning from the prospective of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. We will have a panel discussion with each faith represented, as well as questions and answers entwined.

Hope to see you there, as we explore how the issue of faith may bring light to someone in the shadows of heartache.

November 30, 2009

Pastoral care visit today with an elderly patient and her friend. They spoke of a dear friend who does not know the Lord. When asked why was that important, they stated because she is not going to Heaven, because she has not accepted Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. They spoke of their long friendship and how my patient Mrs. K's church closed in the early 70's for lack of funds/money, and how her Methodist church merged with the Presbyterian Church. The patient felt that the denomination doctrines, practices, and songs were similar. There obviously was a joining of spirits and a reaffirmation of their faith beliefs despite different denominational upbringings.

How ironic that earlier that afternoon I met with a family whose mother had just passed. She was 102 years old. I remember my first meeting with her. It was a crisp bright fall sunny day. As soon as I walked through the door, she stated, "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." Although initially I thought she was Catholic, when she made that remark I knew that she was Protestant. And we talked about that as we stood around her body. Her faith, gave the family comfort in that they believed that she was home with the Lord Jesus.

December 8, 2009,

Spoke with Ali. He stated that our workshop was a blessing to him. The following day his wifes uncle died, who was the patriarch of the family. He suggested to her that she help her aunt with the arrangements, and cautioned her on what not to say, such as he is in a better place, or he is no longer suffering. He felt the impact of the workshop. Later the aunt commented as to how helpful his wife was. Surely we can mourn together those not born together as we operate in love and compassion. Perhaps that is the balm, the ribbon that binds us together in our humanity and caring.

Lesson from the December 4, 2009, Workshop:

If you don't trust God with the vision given, how can you be trusted with the Victory? Each of the panelists selected for the workshop, Pastor Jim Barnum, Dr. Ali al-Rahman, PhD, and Rabbi Simcha Zamir, came into my spirit; and I followed that. Although it was suggested that I reach out to a priest, as most of the employee's at the Hospice care network are Catholic. The presence of a Priest really never settled in my spirit. I thought of a priest originally as I meditated on the format for the workshop, but as time went on, I was fascinated on the concept of learning, and teaching about the religious other, rather than simply trying to affirm, the current faith beliefs of the target audience. That leading of the spirit was timely and quite accurate as can be exhibited by the kind thoughts and reflections given by the audience after the seminar. There comments are included

Survey Responses to the workshop from the audience

This was a very interesting subject. I believe we need more in-services like this.

Perhaps we could bring in clergy from other denominations also next time. Thank you so much for helping us to understand the grief process of other religions, and to discuss the pain of loss of a loved one, especially a child.

- This has been a wonderful presentation with three genuine and human representatives of the major Western religions. I learned a lot.
- This was a very good learning experience and insight.
- I really enjoyed hearing from different faiths from my own. The presentations of all were superb!! So glad I joined.
- Thank you for a wonderful seminar. Much compassion was felt throughout the room.
- It was wonderful hearing from all three perspectives. It would have been nice to hear little more about rituals like Shiva in protestant/Muslim traditions.
- I would like to thank you so very much. It was excellent and will help me become a better person/nurse.
- This was an excellent workshop; my gratitude to the panel and to George for participating and arranging such an enlightening conversation. God Bless you all.
- Uplifting, interesting, enlightening. In many ways all that was said helped me to feel like we are all the same people who have a common ground and

common needs and all need the support of others during grief and dying.

Thank you.

- I look forward to next conference.
- Thank you so much for an excellent presentation. We hardly ever get a chance to stop and learn and feel, which is what you were able to create and facilitate. We should have more chances to bring up awareness of all of our gifts/talents in each religious tradition. 10+ stars.
- The entire program was very special for me. I learned about perspectives that had personal significance and will help me with dialogue with my patients and with God. I do hope that in the future, clergy will be more trained in pastoral care so that they can meet the needs of the community, as this panel does so well.
- Thank you doesn't seem enough to write or say for this enlightening, educating session. I'm grateful to have had this opportunity to be amongst such experienced knowledgeable people willing to share so much, give so much to a stranger. In this holiday season approaching, it gives me hope that the words Peace on Earth" can truly be possible.
- Good session – informative. Thank you
- What struck me about the discussion and the 3 presenters is that they seemed to be saying, "we can mourn together" by being human and staying on the human level, just being with a mourner and not having to have answers, just acknowledging one's anger or one's deep hurt. This is what I heard.

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